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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out how school and public libraries were performing as education providers and how well they were responding to the country's urgent demands for school improvement. This general audience report summarizes the results of the assessment of school and public libraries. It discusses staffing and patronage, the use of libraries by students and others, the amount and adequacy of materials and resources, programs and services offered by libraries, availability of technological equipment, access to the Internet, education reform, and cooperation between school and public libraries. The information presented comes from several study components. The assessment included two national surveys that were conducted in 1997; one was sent to public library outlets, and the other went to library media centers in both public and private schools. The text of this report provides a general overview of the findings from the surveys. Ten case studies involving both school and public libraries were conducted, and examples from some of them are highlighted in this report. (AEF)

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Assessment of the Role of School and Public Libraries in Support of Educational Reform

General Audience Report

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Assessment of the Role of School and Public Libraries in Support of Educational Reform

General Audience Report

Authors:

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Westat

February 2000

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1. Introduction

Education has generally been considered the primary purpose of school libraries. Public libraries also have viewed education to be an important part of their mission. Therefore, when *A Nation at Risk*, a report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983), warned of problems in the American educational system, the library community wanted to participate in the reform activities that were a response to the report.

The library response included two reports, *Alliance for Excellence: Librarians Respond to A Nation at Risk* (U.S. Department of Education, 1984) and *Realities: Educational Reform in a Learning Society* (American Library Association, 1984). *Alliance for Excellence* called for libraries to become full partners with educators, parents, and the community to produce educational renewal. The authors proposed that the effective use of information resources should become a part of the school curriculum and that teachers and librarians should jointly plan curriculums, and that libraries also should have a major role in addressing adult illiteracy. The *Realities* report included four important concepts: 1) children learn before they go to school; 2) good schools need good school libraries; 3) in a learning society, people need libraries throughout their lives; and 4) public funding of libraries is an investment in individuals and the community.

Libraries must operate in the context of changes within educational systems and the greater society. Among the educational reforms that have occurred since *A Nation at Risk* are the development of the National Education Goals and of curriculum standards for each of the content areas. Societal changes include the tremendous advances in technology and the concomitant increase in the importance of information because of its availability through the technology. Thus, the need for information literacy, including computer literacy, has become increasingly important. As a result of all these changes, school and public libraries find themselves in the position of reexamining their resources, the skills of their staff, their programs, and their services.

Alliance for Excellence called for libraries to assess their performance and effectiveness. This study, *Assessment of the Role of School and Public Libraries in Support of Educational Reform*, was funded by the U.S. Department of Education to conduct such an assessment at the national level. The study purpose was to find out how school and public libraries were performing as education providers and how well they were responding to the country's urgent demands for school improvement. It was intended to inform researchers, policymakers, and practitioners on six key issues:

- To what extent are school and public libraries contributing to education reform, and to what extent can they contribute?
- What programs and services are school and public libraries providing to meet the needs of preschool and elementary and secondary (K-12) education providers?
- How well do these services and programs meet the needs of preschool and K-12 education providers?
- Do school and public libraries have the capacity – human and information resources, technology, and facilities – to respond adequately to identified needs and to support systemic reform?
- What new technologies are promoting student opportunity to learn by improving services and resources in school and public libraries?
- What can we learn from successful school and public library programs and services designed to support preschool and K-12 education? Can these programs serve as models for the improvement of all school and public libraries? What are the barriers to effective services and programs?

This general audience report summarizes the results of the assessment of school and public libraries. It discusses staffing and patronage, the use of libraries by students and others, the amount and adequacy materials and resources, programs and services offered by libraries, availability of technological equipment, access to the Internet, education reform, and cooperation between school and public libraries. The information presented comes from several study components. The assessment included two national surveys that were conducted in 1997; one was sent to public library outlets, and the other went to library media centers in both public and private schools. The text of this report provides a general overview of the findings from the surveys; the full report includes appendixes that provide a large number of detailed tables for those readers who desire additional information. Ten case studies involving both school and public libraries were conducted, and examples from some of them are highlighted in this report. Four papers on selected topics were commissioned for the study and appear in a separate volume. A literature review also was prepared for the study.

All specific statements of comparison made in this report have been tested for statistical significance through t-tests, and are significant at the 95 percent confidence level or better. However, given the large amount of data collected and the detail provided in the appendix tables of the full report, only a small number of the potential statistically significant comparisons have been presented. Standard errors are provided for all appendix tables so that readers may determine the statistical significance of comparisons that are not discussed. Summary information about the survey methodology is provided in another appendix to the full report. More detailed information is provided in a separate methodology report.

2. School Library Media Centers

In the study, we collected data from individual school library media centers rather than school systems. (In this report, the terms "school library media centers," "school LMCs," and "school libraries" are used interchangeably. While schools may use any of the terms, "school library media center" is the term that reflects the fact that modern libraries provide computer and audiovisual resources as well as printed materials.) This general audience report focuses on the estimates for all public school library media centers because public schools account for 82 percent of all schools with library media centers, and because 91 percent of U.S. students attend such schools. In the full report (Appendix A), survey findings for school library media centers are shown in for all school libraries and by the following characteristics:

Public

- Educational level
  - Elementary
  - Secondary
- Size of school
  - Less than 300
  - 300 to 499
  - 500 to 749
  - 750 or more
- Free lunch
  - Less than 20 percent
  - 20 to 49 percent
  - 50 percent or more
- Region
  - Northeast
  - Southeast
  - Central
  - West

Private

- Educational level
  - Elementary
  - Secondary
  - Combined
- Size of school
  - Less than 150

- 150 to 299
- 300 to 499
- 500 or more

- Religious affiliation
  - Catholic
  - Other religious
  - Nonsectarian

A survey was sent to each sampled school with the instruction that it should be completed by the person who is most knowledgeable about the school library media center. Respondents were asked to select the staffing category that best described their position at the library. About three-fourths (74 percent) of the respondents in the public school libraries were state-certified library media specialists, while only about one-sixth (16 percent) of the respondents in the private school libraries were in this category. About one-fourth (26 percent) of the private school respondents were professional staff who were not certified as library media specialists, and an additional one-fourth (25 percent) were principals.

Use of School Library Media Centers

In 1996-97, 98 percent of public schools and 78 percent of private schools had school library media centers. This section examines several ways in which school LMCs were used, including student use, library policies on checking out materials, and the scheduling of classes in the library media center.

Student Use

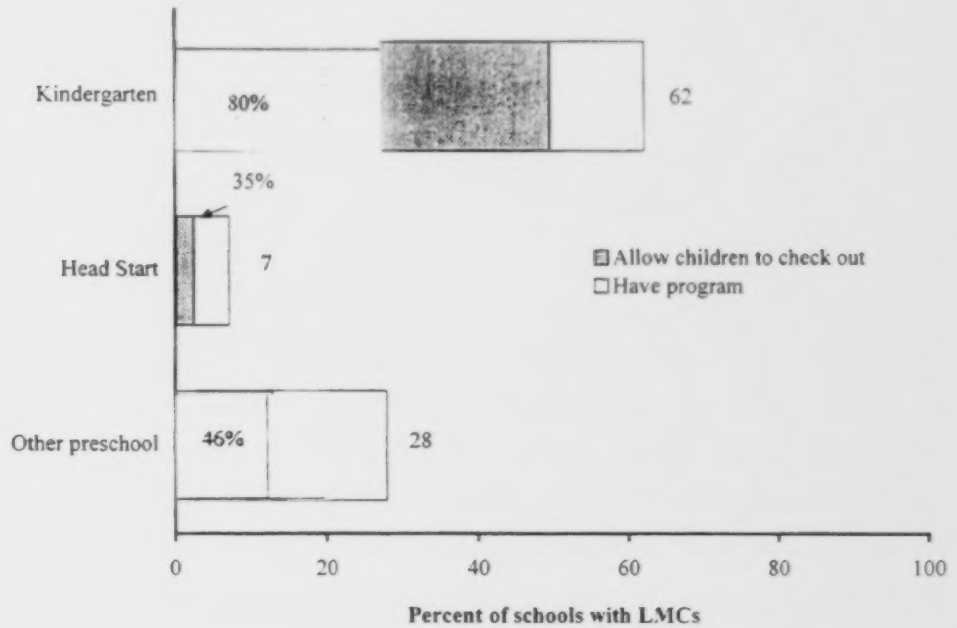
In spring 1997, a total of 44.8 million public school students and 4.3 million private school students attended schools with library media centers. The total number of schools with LMCs was 75,460 public schools and 16,569 private schools.

Students made an average of 598 visits to the school library in public schools and 257 visits in private schools during a typical week in 1997. For both public and private schools, the number of visits was proportional to the school enrollment, with an average of one student visit for each student enrolled. However, this statistic does not imply that all students visited the library every week — students who visited the library more than once in a typical week were counted once for each visit.

Policies on Checking Out Materials From the Library

Schools often have special categories of students and others who may or may not be allowed to check materials out from the library. The great majority (80 percent) of public schools with kindergarten programs allowed their kindergarten students to check out materials (figure 2-1). Preschool students were less likely to be able to check out materials: about one-third (35 percent) of schools with Head Start programs and one-half (46 percent) of schools with other preschool programs allowed those children to check out materials. Some other categories of people who sometimes were allowed to check out materials were parents of students in the school (87 percent of the schools), other members of the local community (65 percent), kindergarten students not enrolled in the school (14 percent), and pre-kindergarten children not enrolled in the school (14 percent).

Figure 2-1. Percent of public schools with library media centers (LMCs) that have programs for preschool and kindergarten, and the percent of those that allow children to check out materials



Scheduling of Classes in the LMC

Many librarians feel strongly that library media centers should be flexibly scheduled rather than regularly scheduled in order to maximize their usefulness and availability. *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, prepared by the American Association of School Librarians and the

Association for Educational Communications and Technology (1999, p. 89), states that "Predetermined timetables without other options and practices that limit access to resources on the basis of age, ability level, or other means of grouping can stifle intellectual curiosity and authentic learning. Flexible schedules can also allow the school library media specialist more opportunities for collaborative planning with teachers." Almost three-fourths (70 percent) of all public school LMCs reported that they used flexible scheduling, although it was often used in combination with regular scheduling as well. Half of all libraries (50 percent) said that all classes were regularly scheduled, and 21 percent said that some but not all classes were regularly scheduled. Most secondary school LMCs (95 percent) used flexible scheduling, as did 60 percent of elementary school libraries. Regularly scheduling all classes primarily occurred at the elementary level, where it was used by two-thirds (66 percent) of the school libraries, compared to only one-eighth (12 percent) of secondary school libraries.

***Information Power* in Action**
Midwestern Suburb

In this school district, the library media center (LMC) is considered the center of the school and often it is physically located in the center of the building, especially at the elementary level. Each of the 23 schools in the district has a full-time library media specialist (LMS) (two in the high school) and one paraprofessional. All schools are linked through the district's own fiber optic network.

Classroom teachers must provide a lesson plan prior to bringing their classes to the LMC. The lesson plans contain objectives, activities, facilitators (classroom teacher and/or LMS), and how student work will be evaluated. Classroom teachers stay with the class when they are in the LMC. Classes are flexibly scheduled into the LMC. One of the challenges is having too many classes wanting to use the facility at the same time.

Elementary students also come to the LMC as a part of the REAL (Reading, Enjoying, and Appreciating Literature) program. It consists of independent reading for pure enjoyment; no high-pressure assignments are attached to the activity. The program is usually conducted by paraprofessionals, many of whom are certified teachers. Middle school students participate in sustained silent reading.

The LMCs have a curriculum-based collection. Schools use a thematic approach to instruction whereby grammar, social studies, and the other content areas are woven into lessons based on a major theme such as honesty. In addition, a holistic approach is taken by integrating the teaching of skills and content.

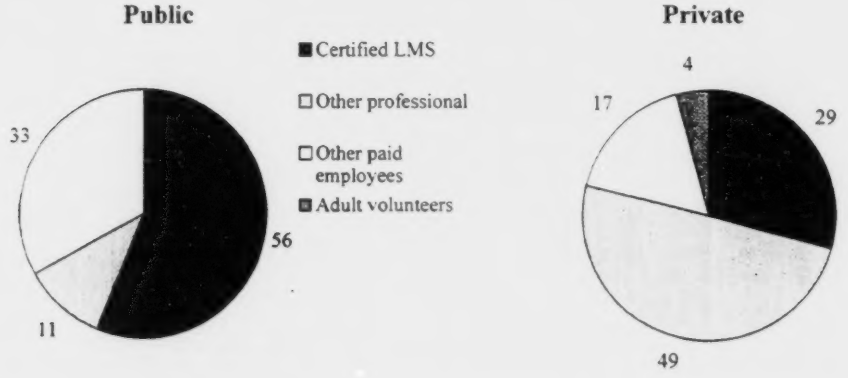
Time for planning is a strength of this district. In one elementary school visited, each grade level or multi-age team has 3 hours of planning time per week. Over a 2-week time period, the LMS meets with every team. She finds it easier to provide services to 8 teams than it would be to try to serve 34 individual teachers. In middle school, teachers have a 7-period day: 5 periods of teaching, 1 for personal planning, and one for team planning. The LMS attends many of the team planning sessions.

Site-based management occurs throughout the district, and the LMS serves on the individual school committees. In addition, two of the high school LMSs serve on the district curriculum committee. They have made presentations regionally and statewide on how to work with classroom teachers. In addition, they have prepared a document that provides very practical suggestions for moving a library media center to a more curriculum oriented library.

Library Staffing

School library media centers had a total 249,338 staff at public schools and 68,991 staff at private schools. Most of the LMC staff worked part time, accounting for about 65 percent (160,901) in public schools and 87 percent (59,772) in private schools. The full-time staff at public schools were most typically state-certified library media specialists (56 percent), while 11 percent were professional staff who were not certified as library media specialists and 33 percent were other paid employees (figure 2-2). The part-time staff were most typically volunteers (69 percent), though 12 percent were professional staff (either certified or not) and 18 percent were other paid employees. Private schools typically do not face the type of certification requirements found in public schools. Thus, only 29 percent of full-time library staff at private schools were certified as library media specialists.

Figure 2-2. Staffing at school library media centers (LMCs), by school type and type of staff



NOTE: Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding.

Overall, 78 percent of public schools had a state-certified library media specialist, with an average of 0.7 state-certified librarians per school. If all staff are included, public school libraries had an average of 0.9 professional staff (including non-certified professional staff), 0.6 other paid employees, and 0.7 adult volunteers. On average, there were 648 enrolled students per professional librarian and 397 per paid staff. School enrollments appear to be a good indicator of the workload of school librarians, because the ratios of weekly patronage of the library to the number of staff were roughly the same as the ratios of enrollment to the number of staff (653 in weekly patronage per professional librarian, and 400 in weekly patronage per paid staff).

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An estimated 11 percent of public schools with LMCs had neither a full-time nor part-time librarian, an absence more frequent at the elementary than at the secondary level (15 percent versus 3 percent). However, such schools typically did have an aide at the library, with only 1 percent of all schools with a library media center having neither a librarian nor an aide. Private schools followed a different pattern. About one-third had no librarian (32 percent), and one-fifth (22 percent) had neither a librarian nor an aide.

Among public schools, 22 percent lacked a full- or part-time library media specialist who was state certified, and 39 percent lacked a full-time state-certified library media specialist. Because it is the smallest public schools that were the most likely to lack a full-time state-certified library media specialist (73 percent versus 15 to 42 percent for larger schools), the percentage of students in schools without a full-time state-certified library media specialist was lower than the percentage of schools without one (27 percent versus 39 percent).

School LMCs in the Southeast were more fully staffed than were those in other parts of the country. Only 2 percent in the Southeast did not have a librarian compared to 10 to 19 percent for other regions. Only 5 percent of the school libraries in the Southeast did not have a full- or part-time state-certified library media specialist compared to 20 to 35 percent for other regions, and only 9 percent did not have a full-time state-certified specialist compared to 37 to 51 percent for other regions.

Materials and Resources

This section examines the current holdings of school library media centers and the adequacy and currency of their holdings.

Current Holdings

Public school library media centers had a total of 679 million items in their holdings in 1997, primarily consisting of 622 million books. These holdings constituted an average of 15.5 books and 17.7 items per student. The ratio of books and holdings to average weekly patronage was roughly the same (15.4 and 17.5, respectively).

Libraries at the larger schools on average had more books per school (13,219 in schools with 750 or more students versus 5,424 in schools with fewer than 300 students) but fewer books per student (11.4 versus 27.6).

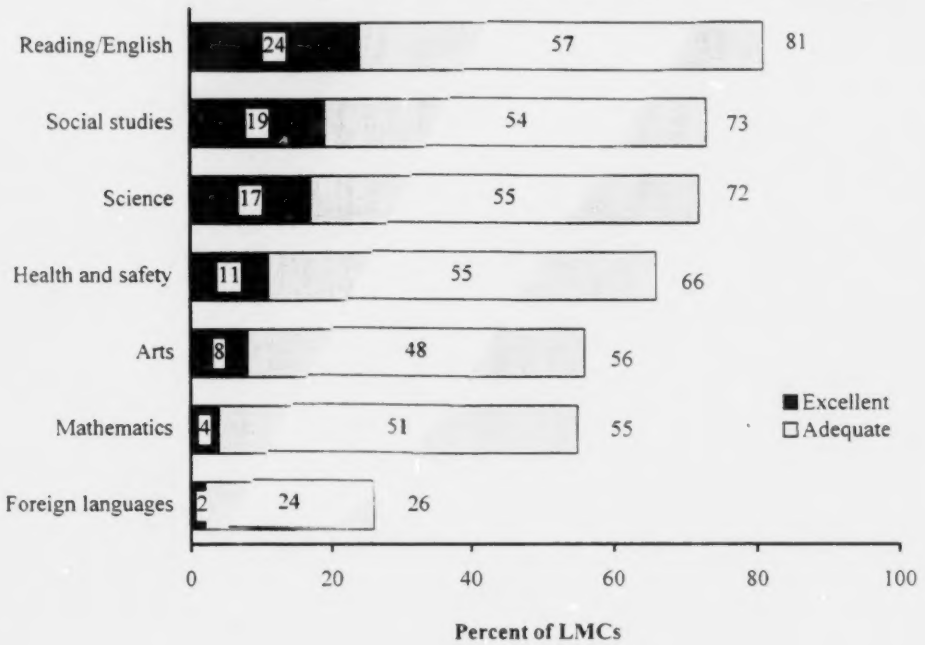
Adequacy of Holdings

The school LMCs were asked about the adequacy of their holdings in supporting seven instructional areas: reading/English, mathematics, science, social studies, foreign languages, arts, and health and safety. For the first four of these areas, they were asked about the overall collection, print materials, video and other audiovisual (AV) materials, and computer software; for the last three, they were asked about the overall collection only.

The results varied greatly by subject area. Reading/English was the best area, with about one-fourth of public school libraries (24 percent) saying the overall collection was excellent, and 57 percent saying it was adequate (figure 2-3). For social studies, 19 percent of the public school libraries said the holdings were excellent and an additional 54 percent said they were adequate. Results for science were about the same as social studies. In the other four subject areas, no more than 11 percent described the overall collection as excellent, though for three of the four areas, a majority did describe it as either adequate or excellent. Foreign languages had a somewhat different pattern with 23 percent of public school libraries reporting that materials in foreign languages were neither available nor needed; this primarily occurred at elementary rather than secondary schools (31 percent versus 6 percent).

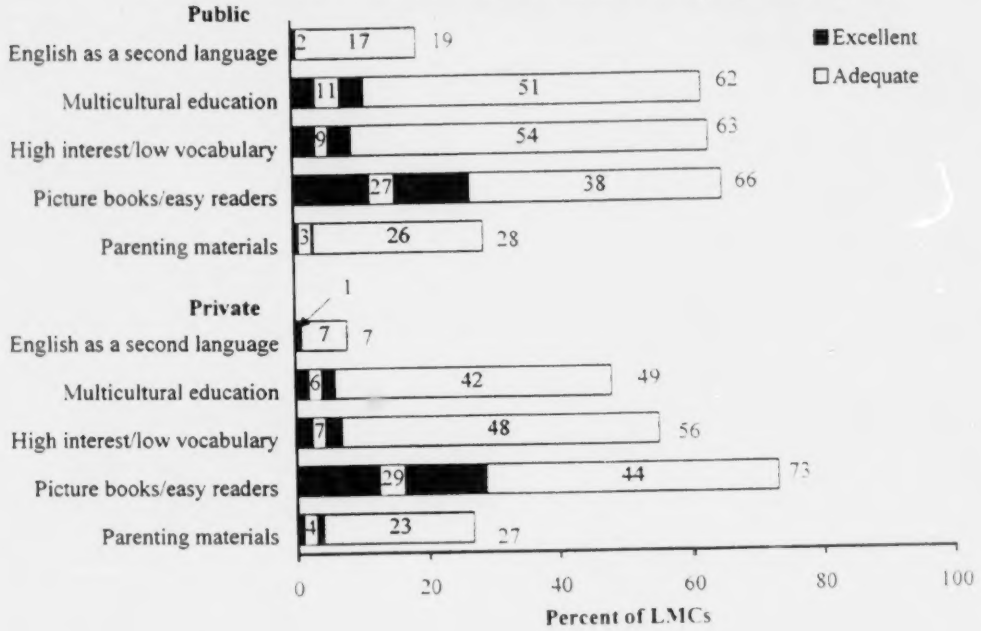
For those four subject areas where data are available, public school libraries considered their print materials to be at a similar level of adequacy as their overall collection. However, they were frequently dissatisfied with their video/AV materials and computer software. Depending on the subject area, between 49 and 58 percent said their computer software was either inadequate or not available but needed, and between 38 and 52 percent said their video and other audiovisual materials were either inadequate or not available but needed.

Figure 2-3. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) reporting their overall collection holdings were excellent or adequate, by instructional area



School library media centers also were asked about the adequacy of their resources in five other areas. About two-thirds of the LMCs at public schools said that their resources were either adequate or excellent with regard to picture books/easy readers (66 percent), high interest-low vocabulary (63 percent), and multicultural education (62 percent) (figure 2-4). By contrast, only 29 percent described their parenting materials as adequate or excellent, and only 19 percent described English as a second language as excellent or adequate. Generally, in each area about a third or more felt that their resources were inadequate (30 to 45 percent, except for picture books/easy readers at 15 percent). One exception to the general pattern was resources for English as a second language, where about half of the library media centers (47 percent) said the category was not applicable.

Figure 2-4. Percent of school library media centers (LMCs) reporting their resources were excellent or adequate in meeting the school's needs, by subject area



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Except for picture books/easy readers, LMCs at private schools differed from those at public schools by more often saying that the category was not applicable. For example, 82 percent said that English as a second language was not applicable (compared with 47 percent for public schools) and 44 percent said that parenting materials were not applicable (compared with 27 percent).

Currency of Holdings

As a way of testing the currency of the library holdings, library media centers were asked the copyright date of their most recent world atlas, and the most recent U.S. president for whom they had a biography. The date of the most recent world atlas is important because of the many changes since 1990 in Europe and the former Soviet Union. About half (48 percent) of the public school libraries had an atlas that was no more than 2 years old (i.e., copyrighted in 1995 or later), but 19 percent had atlases that were copyrighted in 1990 or earlier. A large majority (71 percent) had a biography of President Clinton. In fact, the percentage of LMCs with atlases copyrighted after 1992 (69 percent; the year of Clinton's first election) is about the same as the percentage with biographies of Clinton (71 percent). Similarly, the percentage of libraries with atlases copyrighted before 1988 (8 percent; the last full year of Reagan's

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presidency) was about the same as the percentage with biographies of no president more recent than Carter (7 percent).

Technology

This section describes the technological equipment and services available in school LMCs. Access and use of the Internet and barriers to the provision of Internet services also are discussed.

Equipment and Services

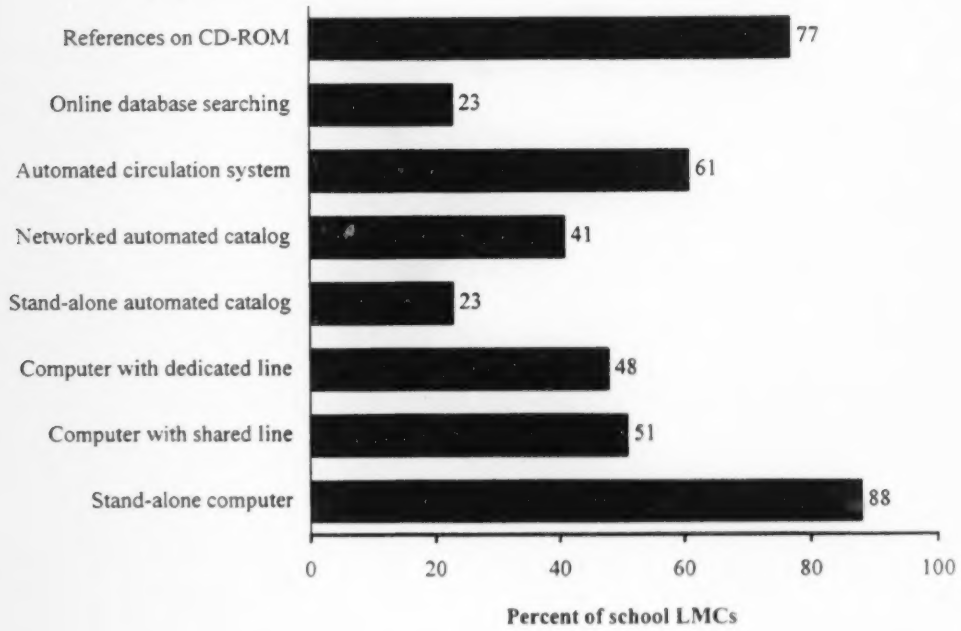
Many people suggest that the telephone is a crucial tool for libraries, both to provide information and to coordinate the use of information with other libraries and with teachers. Overall, 78 percent of public school library media centers had a telephone in 1997. Other types of communications equipment were less common; 20 percent had a fax machine and 8 percent a TTY or other equipment for persons with disabilities.

Stand-alone computers in school libraries were more common than telephones, both in public schools (88 percent versus 78 percent) and in private schools (71 percent versus 51 percent) (figure 2-5). Some of the ways in which computers were set up and used include providing periodical indexes, encyclopedias, or other references on CD-ROMs (77 percent), an automatic circulation system (61 percent), a computer with a shared line (51 percent), a computer with a dedicated line (48 percent), networked automated catalogs (41 percent), stand-alone automated catalogs (23 percent), and online database searching (23 percent).

School LMCs also often had various kinds of television equipment and services. At public schools, 92 percent had one or more VCRs, 72 percent had cable television, and 50 percent had a video laser disk player. Less common were closed circuit television (29 percent), a satellite dish (27 percent), and a television studio (8 percent).

Through technology, school LMCs often can obtain computer access to the catalogs of other libraries, either through the Internet or through other networks. At public schools, 28 percent of library media centers could access the catalogs of a college or university library, 26 percent could access a public library, 20 percent could access other school library media centers, and 15 percent could access a community college library.

Figure 2-5. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) with various types of computer equipment and services



Access and Use of the Internet

As the Internet grows in size and the amount of information provided, it is becoming very important to school LMCs. Among library media centers in public schools, 41,217 (55 percent) had access to the Internet, with 73 percent of those having adopted a policy on student access to the Internet. Most of those public school libraries without Internet access expected to obtain it in a few years: 9,211 LMCs (31 percent) expected to obtain it in 1997, and 11,011 (38 percent) in 1998 (figure 2-6). Only 14 percent had no plans for establishing Internet access.

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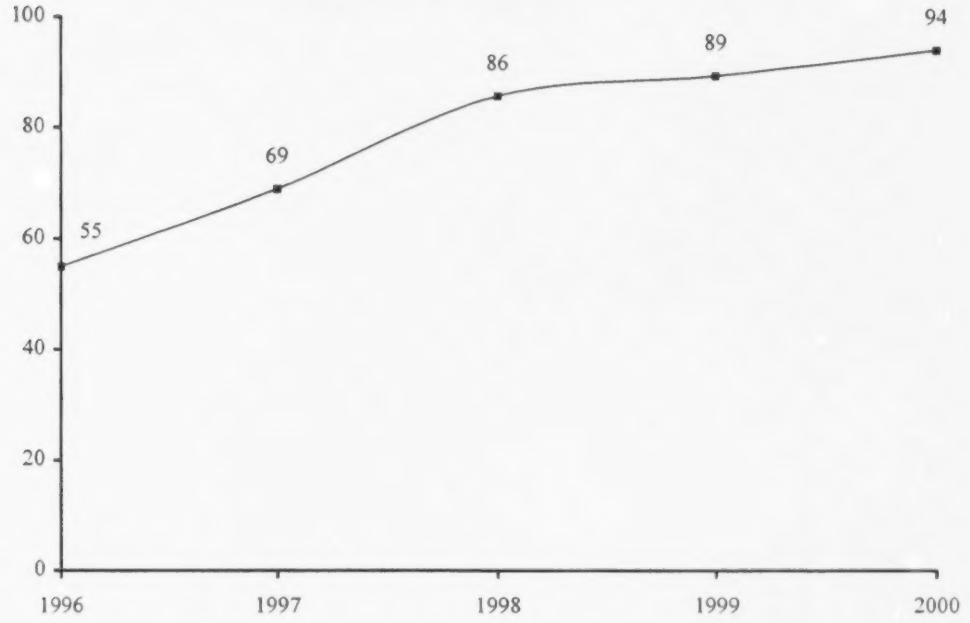
Figure 2-6. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) having or planning to have Internet access, by year access is expected

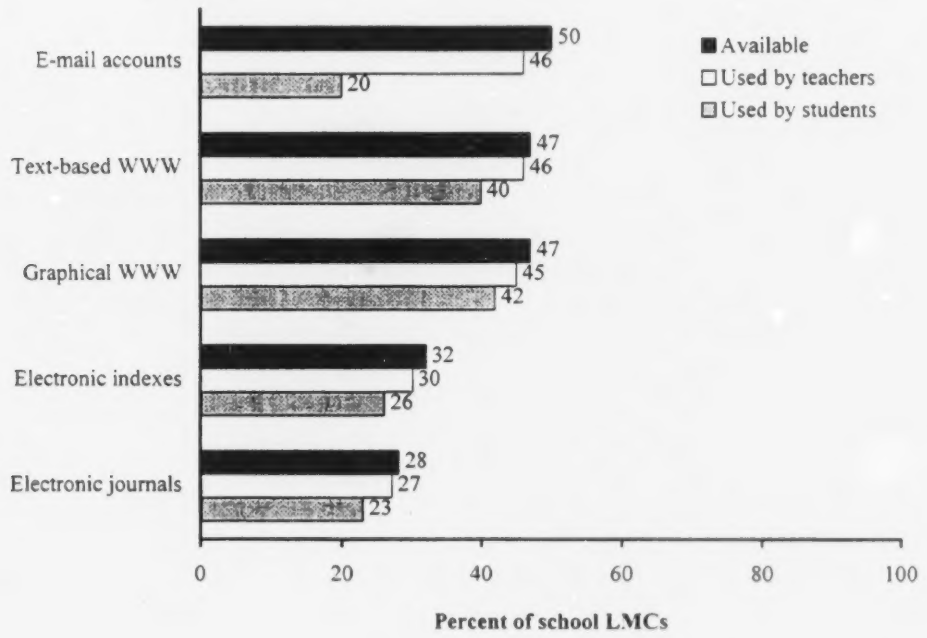


Of the 55 percent of public school library media centers with access to the Internet, most (50 percent of all public LMCs) had e-mail accounts available (figure 2-7). E-mail accounts were widely allowed for use by teachers (46 percent), but much less so for use by students (20 percent).

Altogether, 47 percent of school LMCs had text-based access to the World Wide Web and the same percentage reported having graphical access. Most LMCs that had World Wide Web access reported that the access was used by teachers (45 to 46 percent) and by students (40 to 42 percent).

About one-third (32 percent) of the public school libraries had electronic indexes available in the LMC, and about one-fourth (28 percent) had electronic journals. Most made these available to teachers and to students.

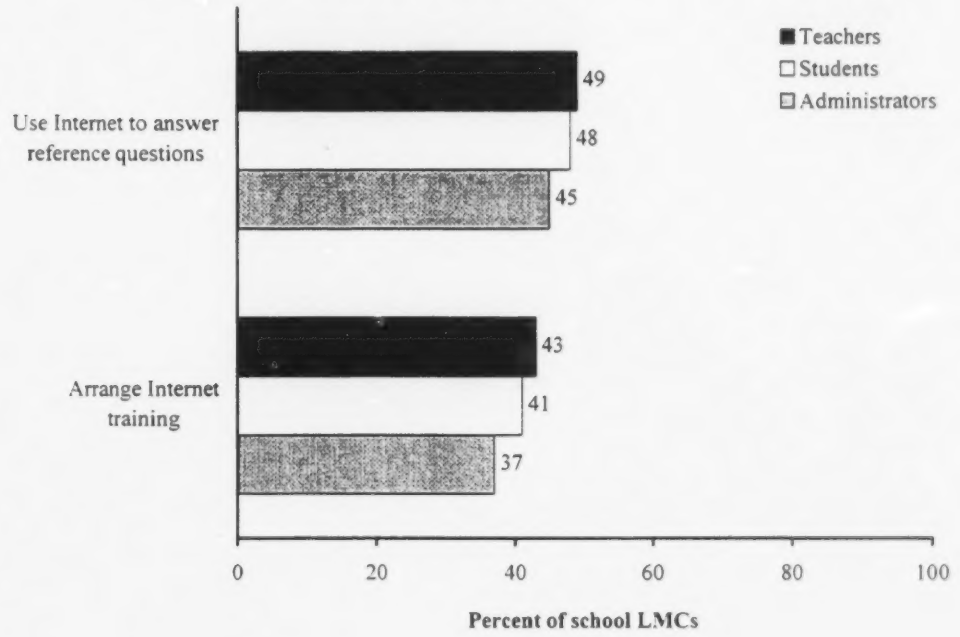
Figure 2-7. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) with various Internet resources, and the percent reporting those resources are used by teachers and by students



One application of the Internet for school libraries is to use it to answer reference questions (figure 2-8). Almost half of LMCs at public schools used it for answering questions by teachers (49 percent), students (48 percent), and administrators (45 percent).

In many cases, LMCs also served as centers for training teachers, students, and administrators how to use the Internet. In public school libraries with access to the Internet, 43 percent arranged Internet training for teachers, 41 percent for students, and 37 percent for administrators.

Figure 2-8. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) providing Internet services to teachers, students, and administrators



Computer Literacy
Rural Southeast

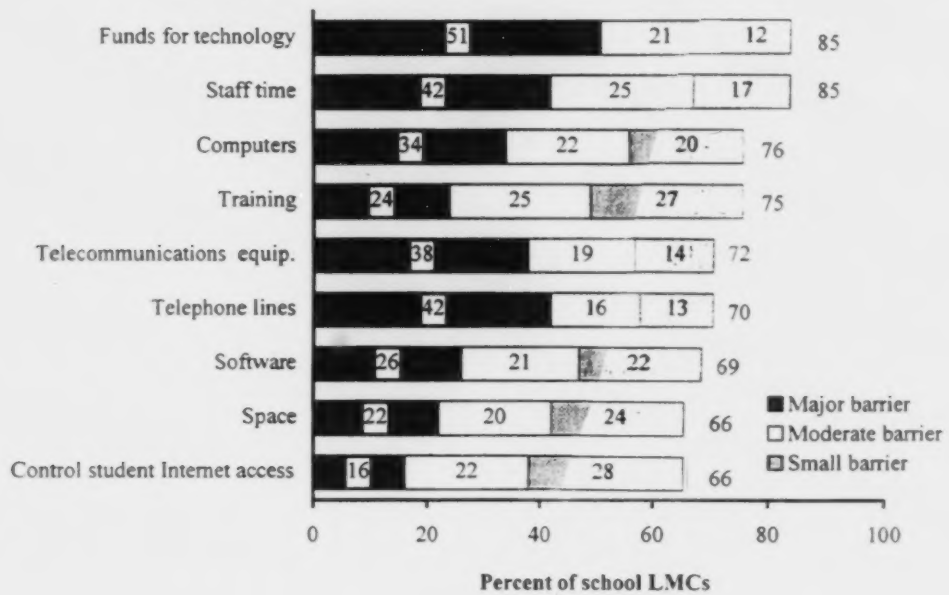
Library media staffs play a key role in providing training and overseeing access to computer use and Internet access. The middle school library media specialist, for example, teaches a computer course to 8th grade students and administers the state computer literacy course, which a student must pass to graduate from high school. The library media specialist recently completed her graduate training. That training, however, did not provide training in the specific area of computers and the Internet, which are a large part of her current responsibilities. Rather, training had come through the school district, which opens essentially all professional development opportunities to library media specialists as well as teachers.

District-supported training was a key feature in the overall technology plan for the school and school district. The district employed a model in which library media staff and a small number of teachers at each school received fairly intensive training in the use of computers and the Internet. They were also given a laptop and printer to use for the year as an incentive to further their proficiency and as an incentive for participating in the training program. In return, teachers and library media specialists were asked to provide approximately 10 hours of in-service training for other teachers in their schools and to serve as mentors providing leadership and support for the use of computers by other teachers. Thus, they became a key resource in the promotion of the greater use of technology in the school.

Barriers to the Provision of Internet Services

At public schools, the factors that most often constituted a major or moderate barrier to library media centers' access of the Internet were an insufficient amount of funds allocated for technology (72 percent), staff time (67 percent), telecommunications equipment (57 percent), telephone lines (58 percent), computers (56 percent), and training (49 percent) (figure 2-9). Interest in the Internet, however, was generally not even a small barrier. The interest of librarians was not a barrier at 82 percent of public school LMCs, the interest of administrators was not a barrier at 63 percent, the interest of teachers was not a barrier at 56 percent, and the interest of the community was not a barrier at 59 percent.

Figure 2-9. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) facing various barriers to maximizing Internet access



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Programs and Services

This section discusses general services offered by school library media centers and the needs of school LMCs.

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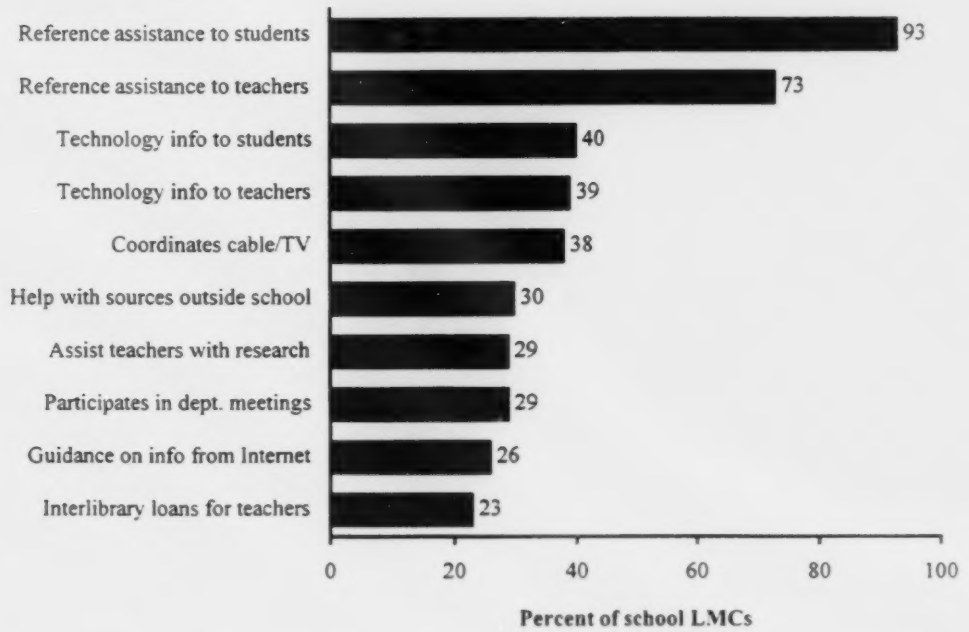
General Services

The services that library media centers at public schools said they provided frequently were reference assistance to students (93 percent) and reference assistance to teachers (73 percent) (figure 2-10). No other service was provided frequently by more than 40 percent of the libraries.

Figure 2-10. The services provided most frequently by public school library media centers (LMCs)



Some tasks by their nature may be conducted regularly but not frequently. For example, even if working with teachers on textbook selection is an important role, it may be episodic rather than frequent. From this perspective, it is also useful to find which services were sometimes provided as a way of establishing the range of activities in which library media centers are involved. Almost all of the services were provided by LMCs at least sometimes for most public schools; the only exceptions (where a majority of libraries reported never providing a service) were serving on site-based management teams (65 percent), coordinating textbook selection (73 percent), and coordinating distance learning staff (73 percent). In addition, there were three activities where close to half (i.e., 40 percent or more) of LMCs were never involved: coordinating video production (42 percent), coordinating access to the Internet (47 percent), and providing guidance on evaluating information from the Internet (46 percent).

In general, library media centers at private schools were less likely to provide each service than were public schools. For example, the two most frequently provided services were the same at private schools as at public schools, but the percentage providing those services was lower (78 percent versus 93 percent with regard to reference assistance to students, and 41 percent versus 73 percent with regard to reference assistance to teachers).

The relatively low level of public school libraries' involvement in site-based management teams was due, in part, to the fact that not all schools had site-based management. Among those public schools with site-based management, slightly over half (56 percent) of the LMCs had staff serving on the site-based management teams.

The services provided by school library media centers often varied depending on the subject area involved. In general, public school LMCs were most often involved in working with teachers in reading/English, social studies, and science, while they were least involved in foreign languages and mathematics. For example, about half (54 percent) of the public school library media centers reported working frequently with teachers in selecting and evaluating library media resources in reading/English, 43 percent in social studies, 36 percent in science, and 12 to 22 percent in other subject areas (see the table below). Of four listed services, the most commonly provided service was working with teachers in selecting and evaluating library media resources (12 to 54 percent), while it was less common for library media centers to work with teachers in curriculum development (3 to 17 percent), collaboratively teach curriculum units with classroom teachers (2 to 21 percent), or collaboratively evaluate curriculum units with classroom teachers (1 to 8 percent).

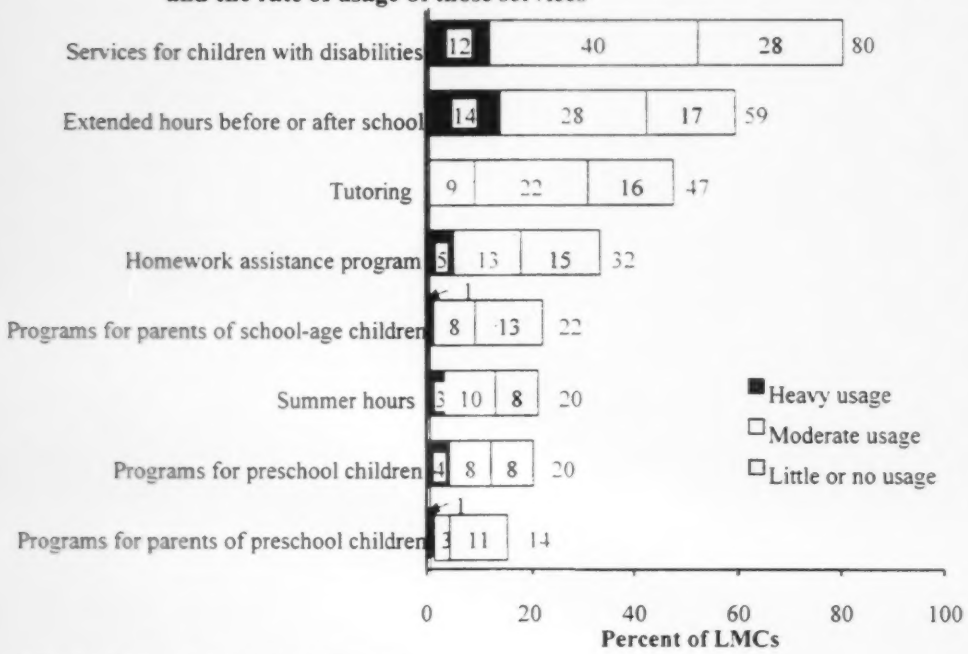
Percent of public school library media centers that frequently provided various services to classroom teachers in 1996-97, by subject area

Subject	Works with teachers in selecting and evaluating library media resources	Works with teachers on curriculum development	Collaboratively teaches curriculum units with classroom teachers	Collaboratively evaluates curriculum units with classroom teachers
Reading/English	54	17	21	8
Mathematics	15	4	3	2
Science	36	9	9	3
Social studies	43	13	14	5
Foreign language	12	3	2	1
Arts	19	5	4	2
Health and safety	22	6	4	2

Close to two-thirds (63 percent) of public schools with LMCs had an information skills curriculum. Most typically, the way that those schools provided the instruction was by always integrating the instruction into other curriculum areas (61 percent), while 11 percent always provided the instruction through an information skills course, and 28 percent used a combination of both means. The curriculum was generally developed by either the district (47 percent) or the school (36 percent) rather than by the state (17 percent). At private schools, the curriculum was primarily developed at the school (87 percent).

School library media centers were asked about eight other types of services, with the focus on how much those services were used (figure 2-11). Two services stood out as being available at a majority of public school libraries — services for children with disabilities (80 percent) and extended hours before or after school (59 percent). These services also received the greatest use, with 12 to 14 percent of public school LMCs indicating heavy usage and 28 to 40 percent indicating moderate usage (compared with 4 to 31 percent indicating heavy or moderate usage in the other areas). Additionally, tutoring was offered at about half of the public school libraries (47 percent), with 9 percent indicating heavy usage, and 22 percent indicate moderate usage.

Figure 2-11. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) providing various services, and the rate of usage of those services



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

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Information Literacy
Northeastern Suburb

Whole language learning, without the use of textbooks, is practiced across the entire school system. This approach means that teachers write their own curriculum, and the media center is the true center of the school. The library media specialist (LMS) is required to have on hand all of the books and other resources that the students may need for the curriculum. Thus, the teachers work closely with the LMS in curriculum development. Not only do the LMSs use books and reference materials, they also use magazines, many of which are on line, as well as other online resources. The LMSs all have flexible schedules so they can work with teachers and with student groups in accessing media.

Because of the importance of library-based learning, research skills as embodied in the district standards become extremely important. Teaching those skills is begun very early in the child's career; at all grade levels, students engage in some degree of group research on particular topics. As a part of the process, writing begins in the earliest grades. There is process and content writing, and it is critiqued by teachers and peers as well as by self-reflection.

The district has developed its own standards in a variety of areas including communication and developing and supporting an informed opinion. The standards for the latter include not only information literacy skills, but also using them in individual research projects. They are:

1) Select and/or explore an area of inquiry.
2) Explore primary and secondary sources to garner general information about the area of inquiry.
3) Demonstrate a working knowledge of the area of inquiry.
4) Interact with others to consider a range of opinions as a basis for formulating and supporting one's opinions.
5) Develop essential question/problem statement/thesis statement(s).
6) Distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information, accurate and inaccurate sources.
7) Collect and synthesize information in support of the opinion.
8) Defend the opinion in written, oral, and/or presentational formats.

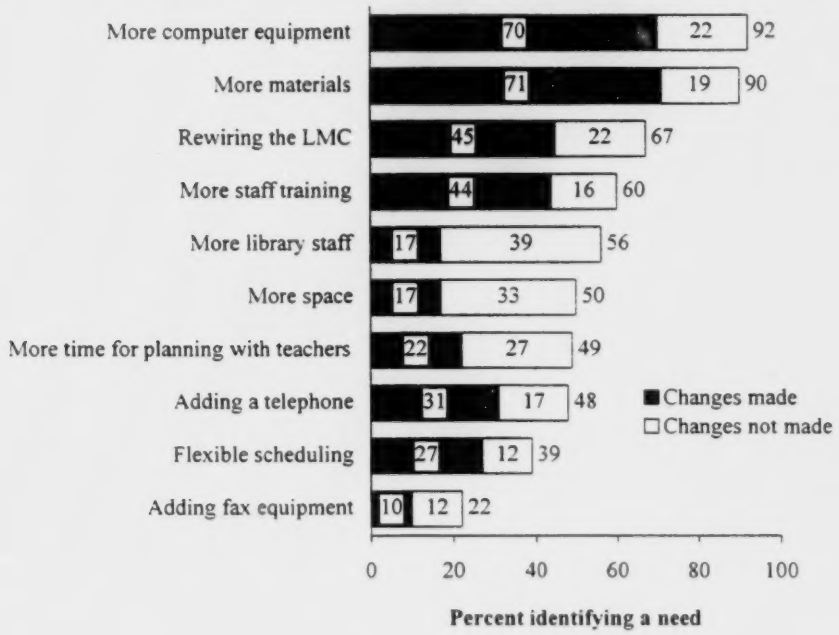
The standards, as well as the rubrics to test them, begin in kindergarten and increase in sophistication across the grades. The library media specialists see developing research and communication skills in students as a large part of their task. They will host whole classes in the library for a week or two to teach them the uses of the media center and the skills of researching and referencing. Appropriate referencing for various types of media are posted next to those media.

The Needs of School Library Media Centers

School libraries may conduct formal needs assessments or perform other types of evaluations of the materials and services they provide. Overall, 38 percent of public school libraries and 42 percent of private school libraries said they had conducted a needs assessment in the last 2 years. Some other common ways that public school LMCs evaluated their materials over the last 2 years were informal evaluations involving only school staff (73 percent), a written survey of school staff (37 percent), an evaluation conducted by a district evaluator (23 percent), and an evaluation involving students or parents (21 percent). Counting these other types of evaluations, 79 percent of public school library media centers conducted at least one type of evaluation in the past 2 years, and 76 percent of those made changes based on the evaluations.

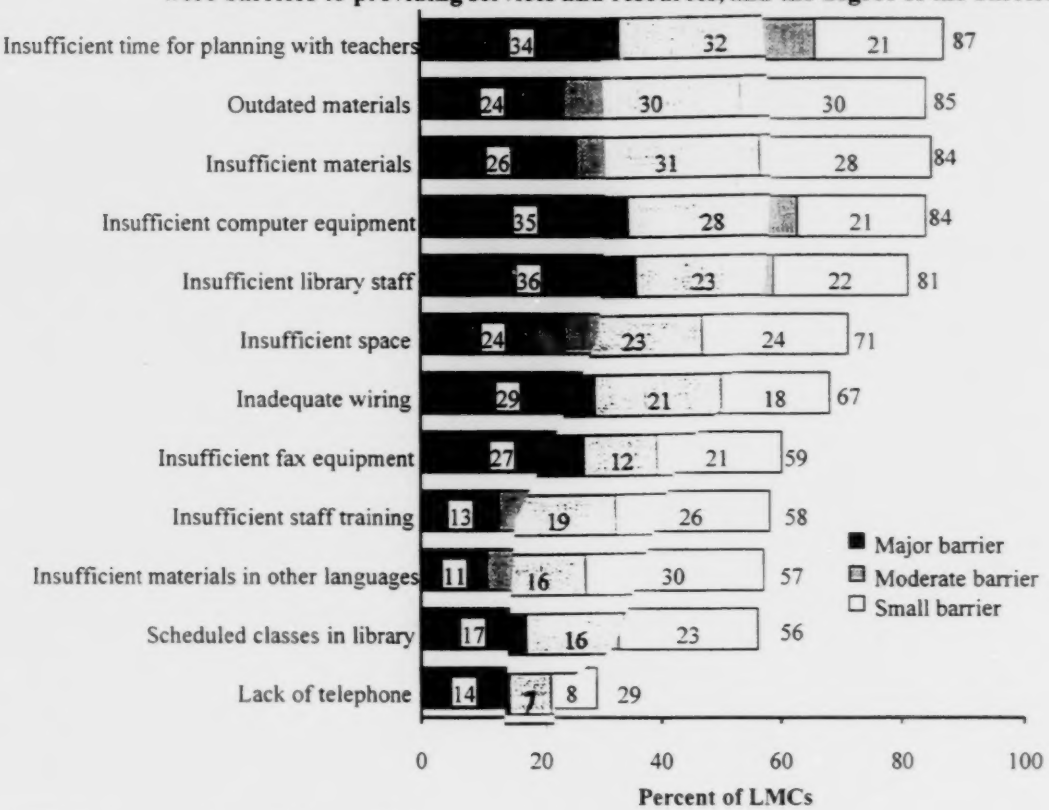
Of those public schools that had conducted needs assessment, the most common needs were for more computer equipment (92 percent), more materials (90 percent), rewiring the LMC (67 percent), more staff training (60 percent), and more library staff (56 percent) (figure 2-12). With respect to the first two of these needs, a large majority of schools reported having made changes (71 percent for more materials and 70 percent for more computer equipment). In the remaining areas, less than half of the schools had made changes. (However, in four other areas (rewiring the LMC, adding a telephone line, flexible scheduling, and more staff training), more than half of the schools that identified needs in one of those areas also made changes in the same area.)

Figure 2-12. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) identifying various needs through a needs assessment, and the percent that made changes



etween 29 and 87 percent of public school library media centers reported that each of 12 internal factors provided at least a small barrier to providing services and resources to students (figure 2-13). The barriers that were most often reported were insufficient time for planning with teachers (87 percent), outdated materials (85 percent), insufficient materials (84 percent), insufficient computer equipment (84 percent), and insufficient library staff (81 percent). In fact, three of these factors were described as *major* barriers by about one-third of the public school LMCs: insufficient library staff (36 percent), insufficient computer equipment (35 percent), and insufficient time for planning with teachers (34 percent).

Figure 2-13. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) reporting that various factors were barriers to providing services and resources, and the degree of the barriers



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

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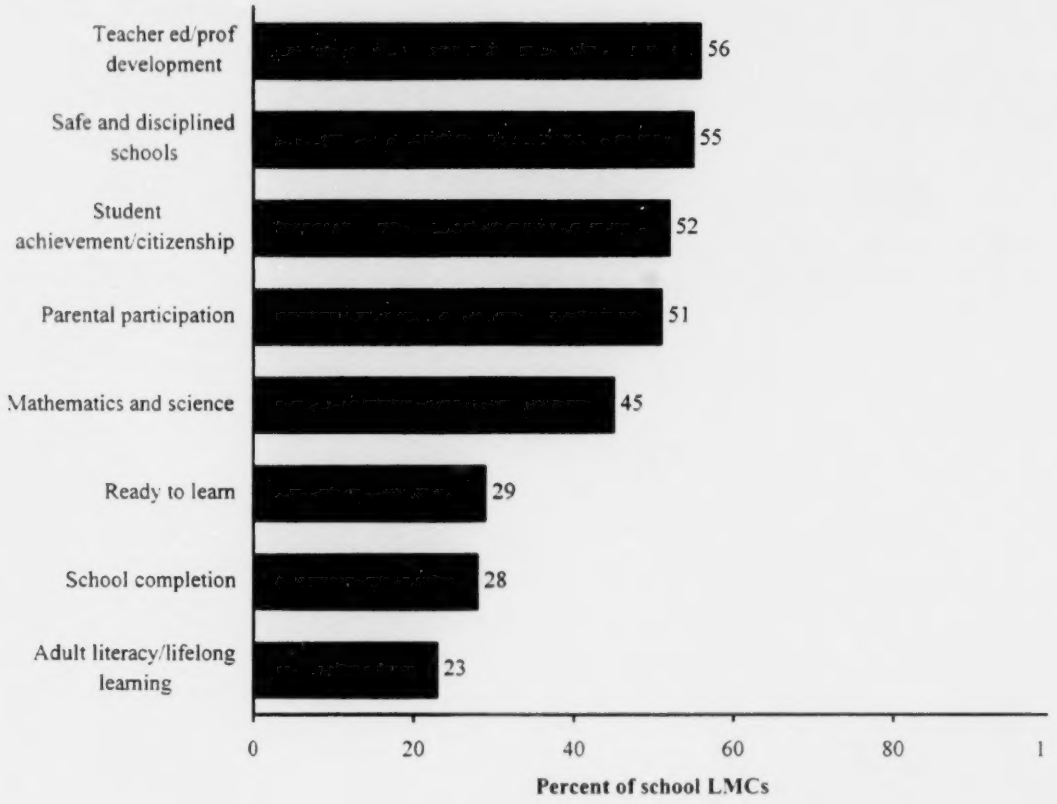
Library Media Centers and Education Reform

One of the papers commissioned for this study explores the implications of selected school reforms for library media services (Hartzell, 1999). It focuses on 29 reforms that speak to the governance, curriculum, organization, and instructional practices at the building level. The reform ideas discussed have been divided into three clusters: 1) reforms that fundamentally restructure school governance, such as school-based management, school choice, and home schooling; 2) reforms targeting how schools deal with specific groups of students, such as at-risk students, high school students, and those in special education; and 3) a collection of 16 reforms that share only the goal of improving student achievement. Hartzell concludes that "many current school improvement proposals imply a need for more effective integration of library media services into curriculum and instruction, and even into administrative functions" (p.50). However, he goes on to describe the formidable challenges faced by school library media specialists in working to achieve that integration.

The survey for this study included questions about school libraries' involvement in some of the recent reform activities. One reform that was included was *Read*Write*Now!*, a program developed by the U.S. Department of Education to promote literacy. Overall, 14 percent of library media centers at public schools supported this program. Of those that supported the program, 29 percent also coordinated the activities with the public library.

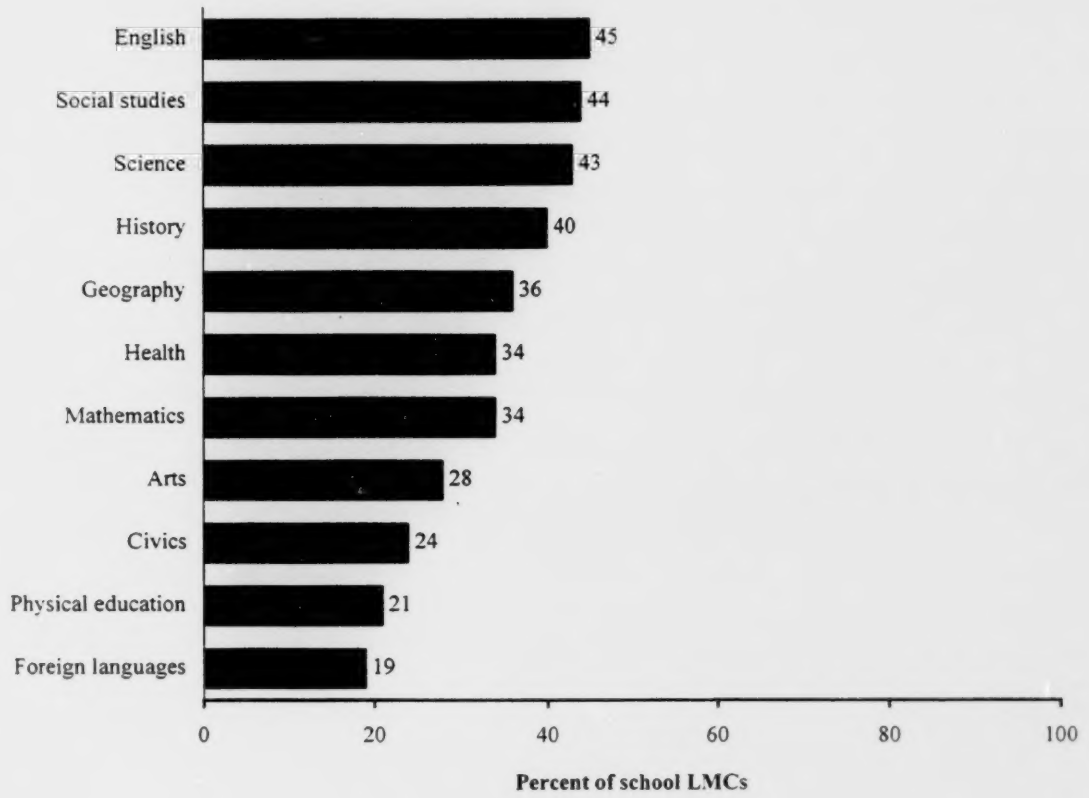
Library media centers were also asked about their involvement in programs designed to address eight of the National Education Goals (figure 2-14). For each of five of the goals, roughly half of the public school LMCs were involved: teacher education and professional development (56 percent); safe, disciplined, and alcohol- and drug-free schools (55 percent); student achievement and citizenship (52 percent); parental participation (51 percent); and mathematics and science (45 percent). The three remaining goals (ready to learn, school completion, and adult literacy and lifelong learning) were each supported by about one-fourth of the libraries.

Figure 2-14. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) involved in programs to address the National Education Goals



School library media centers had some involvement in programs or services designed to address new national or state standards in various curriculum areas. As with other library services, the degree of involvement varied by subject area. Public school libraries were most often involved addressing standards in English (45 percent), social studies (44 percent), science (43 percent), and history (40 percent) (figure 2-15). However, even the areas least often addressed had the involvement of one-fifth or more of the libraries (24 percent for civics and 21 percent for physical education).

Figure 2-15. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) addressing new national or state standards in last 5 years, by area of curriculum

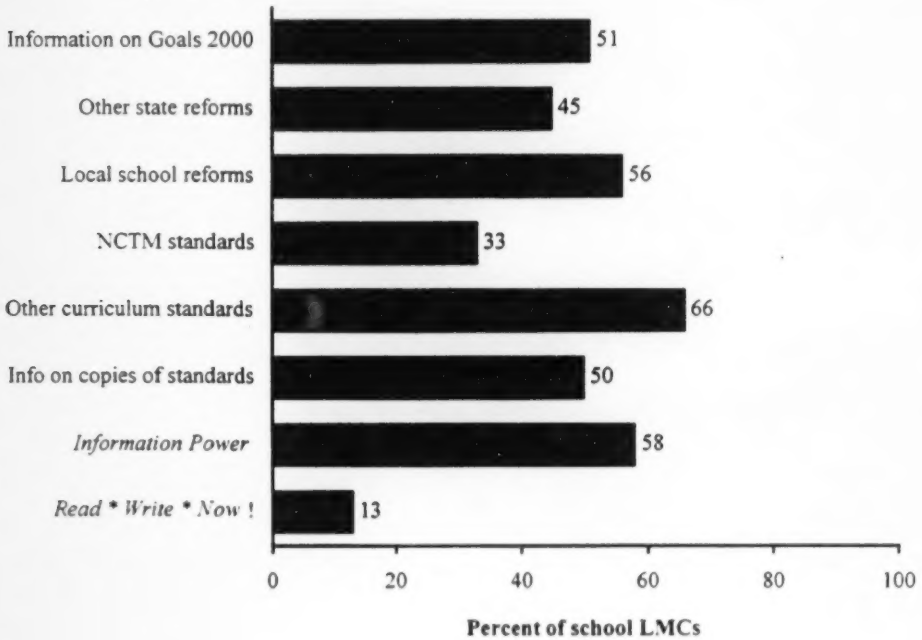


Overall, 76 percent of library media centers at public schools had materials to support professional development. Teachers often could obtain such materials though other libraries as well: 77 percent of the public school libraries said the materials were available through a local college or university library, 71 percent through a local public library, 66 percent through another library in the school system, and 44 percent through a library operated on a regional basis for several school districts. (The last category is low in part because 35 percent of school library media centers said there was no such regional library in their area. Only 3 to 16 percent of libraries said one of the other three types of libraries was not in the local area.)

Libraries had a number of other resources for teachers. At public schools, 80 percent had subscriptions to professional journals, with a mean of eight journals per school at those schools with subscriptions. Also, 58 percent had *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*, 56 percent had materials on local school reforms, 51 percent on Goals 2000, and 45 percent on other state

reforms (figure 2-16). Only 33 percent had the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) standards, which were the earliest set of standards produced under the current wave of reform, but 66 percent of the LMCs had materials on curriculum standards other than NCTM's standards.

Figure 2-16. Percent of public school library media centers (LMCs) with various materials relating to school reform



Providing access to certain outside services was less common. Among library media centers at public schools, 38 percent provided access to "Ask ERIC" (the Educational Resources Information Center), 32 percent to other ERIC information services, and 20 percent to the Eisenhower Clearinghouse.

Professional Educators' Resource Center
Western Suburb

The Professional Educators' Resource Center offers expertise and instructional support to this large district with 30 elementary schools, 6 middle schools, and 4 high schools. The center provides the following resources and services:

- A professional library includes over 250 professional journals; an extensive collection of teacher resource books; literature searching, acquisition, and interlibrary loan services; access to online services; a book and textbook review program; a table of contents distribution service; and multicultural trunk checkout services.
- A consolidated film and video library, shared with three other school districts, lists over 9,000 items for use by students, faculty, and staff. The library offers previewing, purchasing, and processing services as well as courier and reference services.
- The bibliographic services unit provides all technical information for the district's automated library system. The group also completes all cataloging and processing for the automated system.
- A separate unit provides expertise on the use of the automated library system.
- The media production unit includes a slide production center, a slide-to-video transfer service, lamination services, poster printing, die cutting services, copy stand photography, video production, and a computer lab that offers guidance in word processing and desktop publishing.
- The community source unit assists in locating and arranging for special speakers and programs, furnishes field trip information, and assists with the evaluation of resources.

3. Public Library Outlets

In the study, we collected data from individual public library outlets, rather than systems as a whole. Most of the estimates discussed in this general audience report are for all public library outlets. Survey findings are shown in Appendix B of the full report for all library outlets and by the following library characteristics:

- Type of outlet
  - Central/main
  - Branch
  - Single location
- Size of population served by the outlet
  - 0 to 24,999
  - 25,000 to 99,999
  - 100,000 or more
- Region of the country
  - Northeast
  - Southeast
  - Central
  - West
- Presence of a children's, young adult, and/or youth services specialist.

It should be noted that bookmobiles were excluded from the survey.

The surveys were sent to the sampled outlets. Respondents were asked to select the staffing category that best described their position at the library. About three-fourths (73 percent) of the respondents described themselves as directors or branch heads. Most of the respondents (93 percent) were employed in the library outlets for which they were responding.

Patronage and Staffing

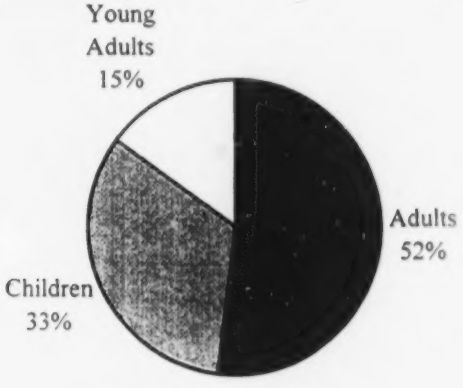
This section discusses the patrons in public library outlets, including those who are children and young adults. Staffing of programs for children and young adults is described as is a comparison between staffing and patronage.

Patronage

In spring 1997, in a typical week, public library outlets received an average of 1,795 patrons and were open for 40.5 hours, although there were considerable differences across the various outlet characteristics. For example, central or main libraries were open for more hours (55.1) and served almost twice as many patrons (3,502) as the overall average. Outlets serving populations of up to 24,999 received an average of only 748 patrons per week, which was less than half of the average for all outlets, while outlets serving populations of 100,000 or more served an average of 3,196 patrons, which is considerably greater than the overall average.

Public library outlets reported that almost half of their patrons were children (33 percent) or young adults (15 percent) (figure 3-1). Since the definitions of "children" and "young adults" vary across the United States, the outlets were asked to provide the age ranges they served under each category. The most common age range for "children" was birth to age 12, a definition used by about one-third (31 percent) of all public library outlets. The most common age ranges for "young adult" were 13 through 18, was used by 22 percent of all outlets, and 12 to 18, used by 17 percent.

Figure 3-1. Patrons of public library outlets



▲ Staffing

In spring 1997, the average number of paid librarians providing services directly to the public was 3.7 librarians for all types of outlets. However, there were differences by type of outlet and size of population served by the outlets. Of the estimated 56,949 paid librarians providing services directly to the public in the United States as a whole, an estimated 8,755 were youth services specialists, 7,054 were children's specialists, and 2,154 were young adult specialists. Therefore, although children and young adults constituted 48 percent of public library patrons, librarians specializing in services to youth made up only 31 percent of the public service librarian population. Even in outlets having a librarian specializing in services to children, young adults, and/or youth, these specialists constituted only 38 percent of all paid librarians who provide service directly to the public, although 49 percent of their patrons were children and young adults.

Public library outlets were asked to identify the staff who were primarily responsible for developing programs for children and young adults in their building. The outlets reported that the development of children's programs was most frequently done by youth services specialists in the building (23 percent), children's specialists in the building (23 percent) or some other building-level librarian (29 percent). Program development for young adults was most frequently done by youth services specialists at the building level (20 percent) or some other building-level librarian. Altogether, 25 percent of all outlets reported that they had no programs for young adults, whereas only 8 percent of all outlets reported that they had no programs for children.

Materials and Resources

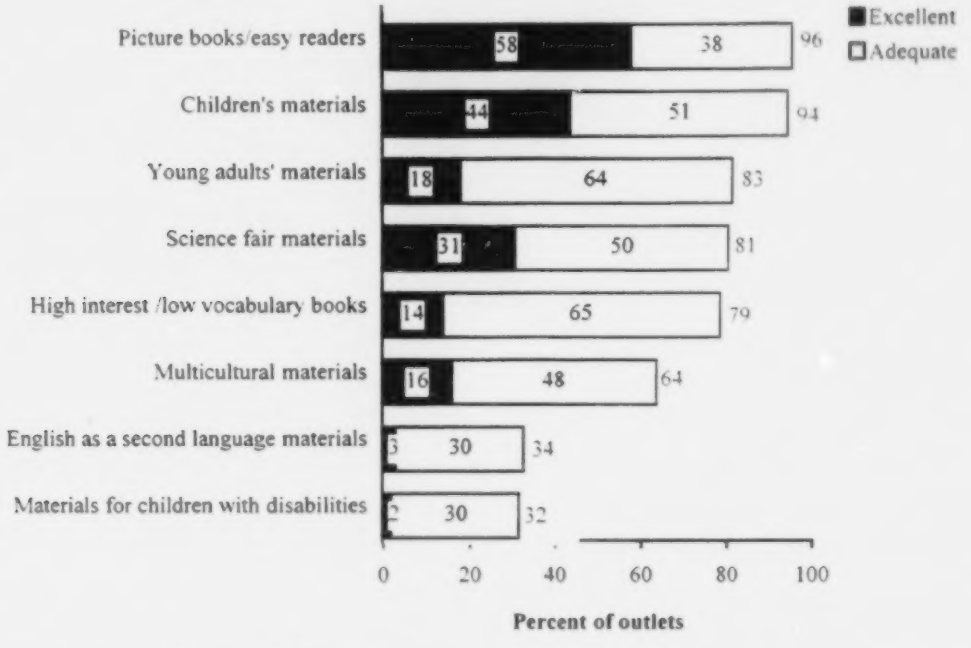
The adequacy of holdings in public library outlets and the currency of the holdings are described in this section.

Adequacy of Holdings

Public library outlets were asked about the adequacy of their holdings in 13 areas that are especially used by children and young adults. Results varied greatly by area (figure 3-2). Picture books/easy readers was the only area in which more than half of the outlets (58 percent) reported that their holdings were excellent. However, most outlets reported that their holdings of picture books/easy readers (96 percent) and children's materials (94 percent) were either adequate or excellent. About four-

fifths (79 to 83 percent) of the outlets reported that their young adults' materials, science fair materials, and high interest/low vocabulary books were either adequate or excellent. In contrast, only about one-third reported that they had adequate or excellent English as a second language materials (34 percent) or materials for children and young adults with disabilities (32 percent).

Figure 3-2. Percent of public library outlets indicating various holdings were adequate or excellent



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Currency of Holdings

As a way of determining the recency of their materials, public library outlets were asked to provide the copyright date of their most recent world atlas and the name of the most recent President for whom they had a biography. The date of the most recent world atlas is important because of the number of changes that have occurred since 1990, particularly in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Only 15 percent of the public library outlets had a world atlas published in the year of the survey; however, more than half (56 percent) had world atlases that were no more than 3 years old (i.e., copyrighted in 1994 or later). Altogether, 12 percent had atlases that were copyrighted in 1990 or before. A large majority (84 percent) reported that they had a biography of President Clinton. In fact, the

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percentage of public library outlets with atlases copyrighted in 1992 or later (83 percent) was about the same as the percentage with biographies of President Clinton, who was elected to office in 1992.

Technology

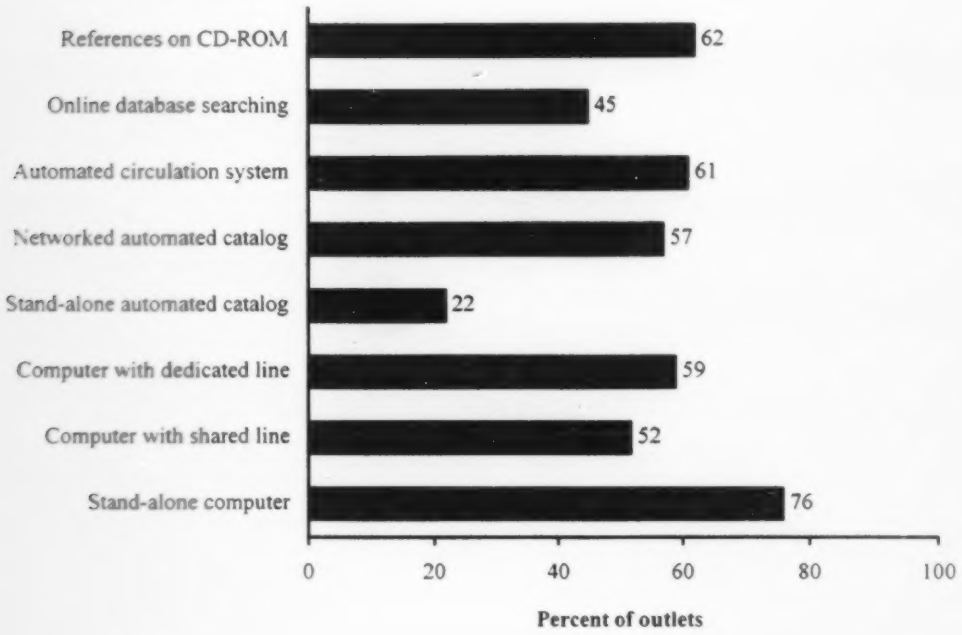
This section describes the availability of communications, television, and computer equipment and services; reciprocal borrowing and online access; Internet access; and barriers to the provision of Internet access.

Equipment and Services

A wide array of technological equipment is being used by the modern public library. On the survey, outlets were asked about the availability of communications, television, and computer equipment and services. Almost all (99 percent) public library outlets had a telephone and about four-fifths (81 percent) had a fax machine. However, only 19 percent had TTY or other equipment for persons with disabilities. Almost three-fourths (72 percent) had a VCR and about one-fourth (24 percent) had cable TV. Fewer than 5 percent of all outlets had closed circuit TV, satellite dish, video laser disk player, or a TV studio.

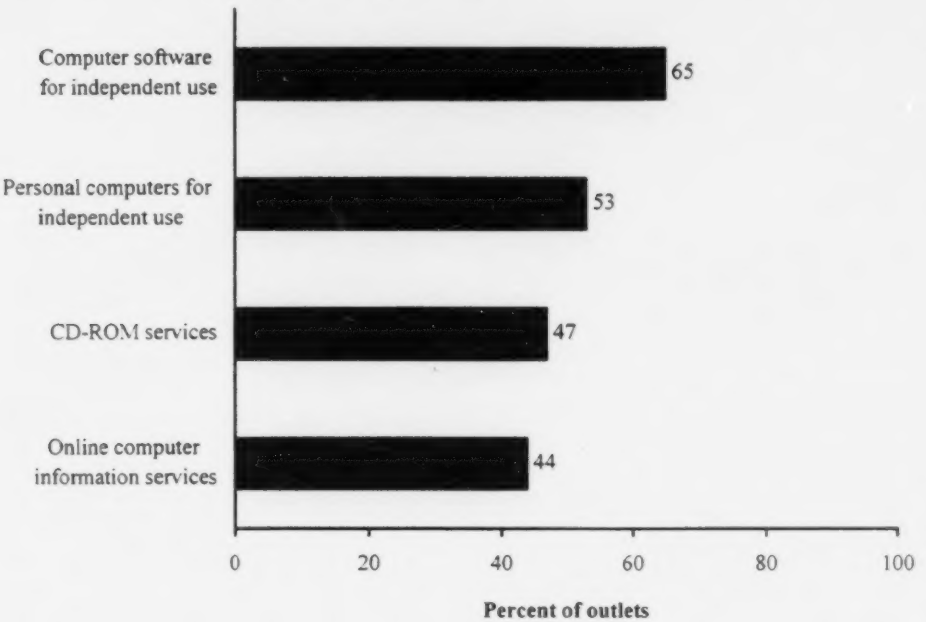
In 1997, stand-alone computers were available in 76 percent of all outlets, while computers with dedicated lines were found in 59 percent and computer with shared lines in 52 percent (figure 3-3). A networked automated catalog was found in 57 percent of all outlets and 22 percent had a stand-alone automated catalog. About three-fifths of the outlets had resources on CD-ROM (62 percent) and about the same percentage had an automated circulation system (61 percent).

Figure 3-3.—Percent of public library outlets with various types of computer equipment and services



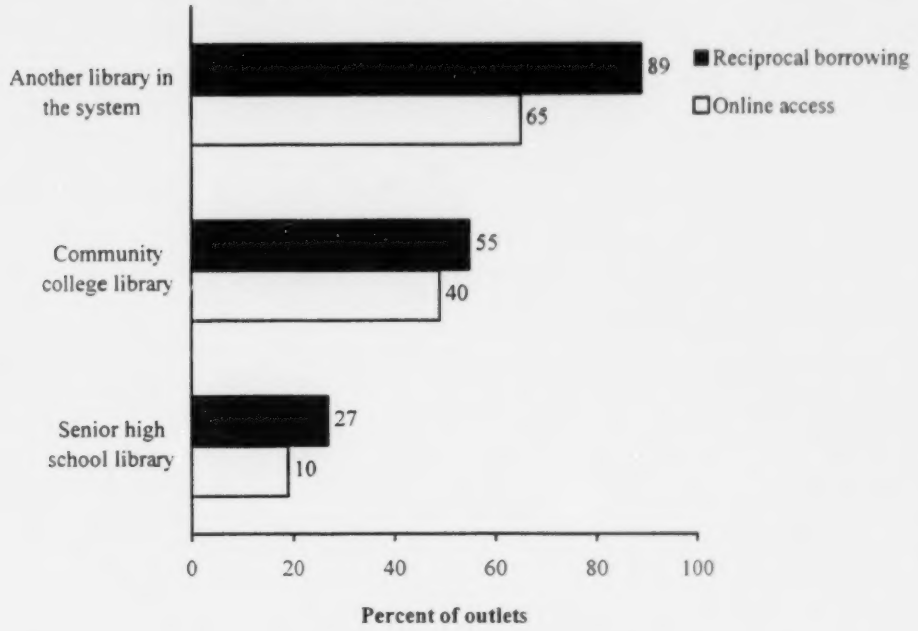
The availability and usage of certain technological resources by children and young adults was included on the survey. Technological resources that were <u>not</u> available for use by children in 44 to 65 percent of all outlets were computer software for independent use (65 percent), personal computers for independent use (53 percent), CD-ROM services (47 percent), and online computer information services (44 percent) (figure 3-4). Similar percentages of outlets did not make these resources available to young adults.

Figure 3-4. Percent of public library outlets reporting that various technological resources were not available for use by children



Public library outlets were asked about reciprocal borrowing and online access, by the Internet or other networks, to the catalog of other libraries. Most (89 percent) outlets engaged in reciprocal borrowing with another library in their system, while only a little more than half (55 percent) engaged in reciprocal borrowing with a community college library, and about one-fourth did reciprocal borrowing with a senior high school library (figure 3-5). Online access to the catalogs of other institutions was used less frequently than reciprocal borrowing. Online access to another library in the system was reported by 65 percent of the public library outlets; to a community college library, by 40 percent; and to a senior high school library, by 10 percent. In addition, 40 percent of all outlets reported that their computer could be accessed from remote locations by patrons. This represented about 6,060 outlets.

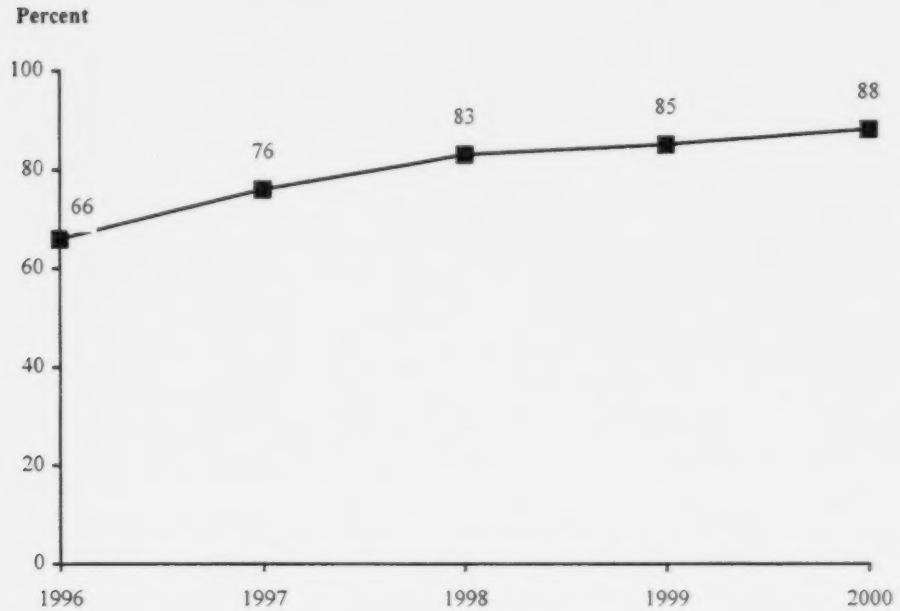
Figure 3-5. Percent of public library outlets with reciprocal borrowing and computer access to the catalogs of various libraries



Internet Access

The Internet is a growing source of information in today's world and access to it is important to public library outlets. In 1996, 66 percent of all public library outlets (about 10,164 outlets) could access the Internet through a computer in their building (figure 3-6). About half of all outlets had a policy on access to the Internet by children and young adults. By the year 2000, 88 percent of all outlets were expecting to have access to the Internet. Of the 34 percent of all outlets that did not have access in 1996, 20 percent, or approximately 860 outlets, had no plans to do so.

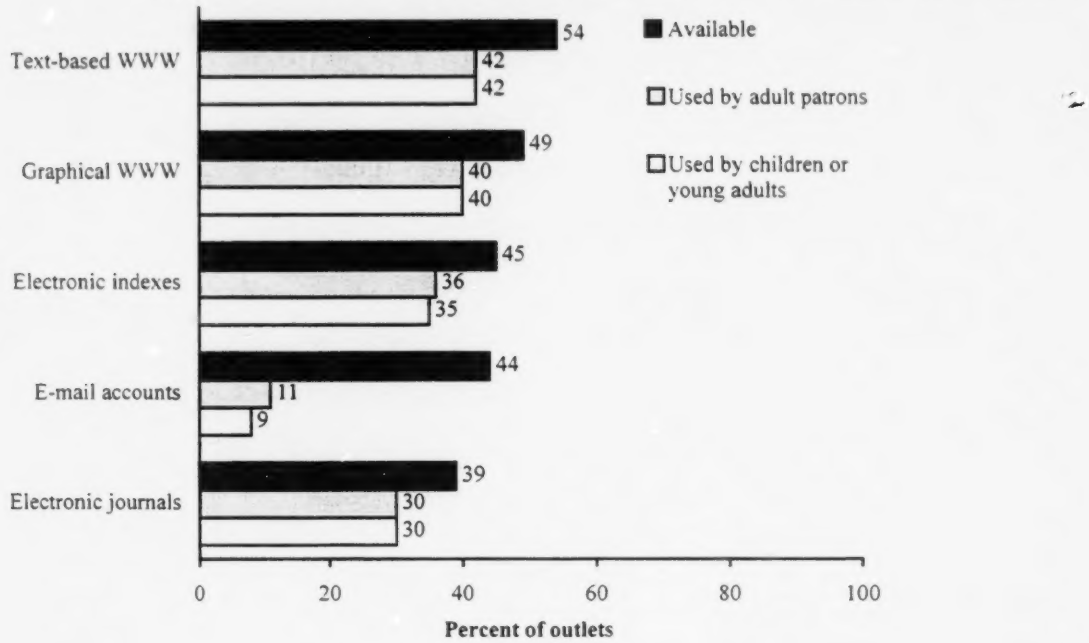
Figure 3-6. Percent of public library outlets having or planning to have Internet access, by year access is expected



In spring 1997, the average number of computers or terminals connected to the Internet in an outlet was 5.0 terminals, for a total of about 49,965 terminals for the United States as a whole. On average, each outlet had 2.4 terminals connected to the Internet that were available to the public. The availability of terminals connected to the Internet was much greater in central and main libraries, which had an average of 13.4 terminals connected to the Internet and 5.5 terminals connected to the Internet that were available for the public.

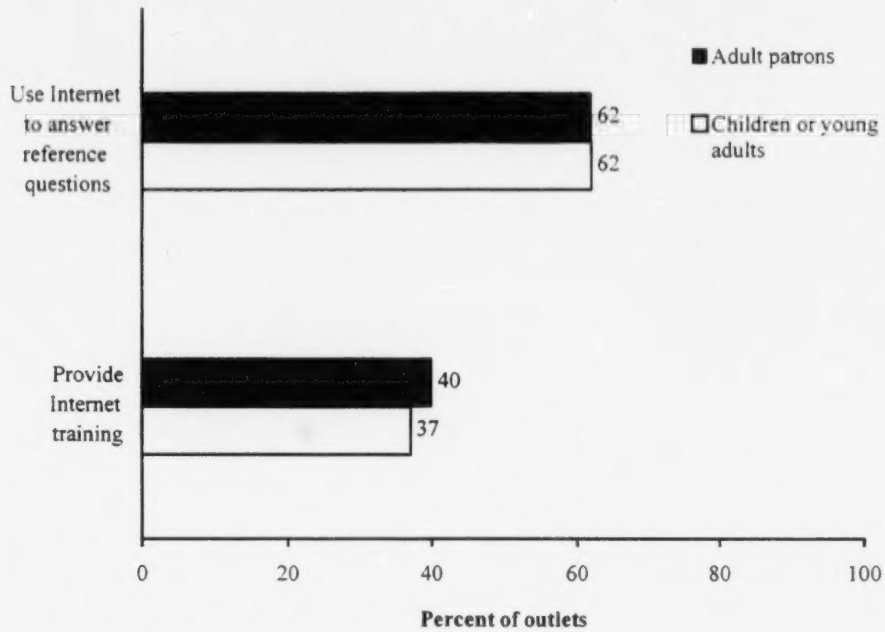
Outlets were asked about the availability of five Internet resources—text-based World Wide Web, graphical World Wide Web, electronic indexes, electronic journals, and electronic mail (e-mail) accounts—and whether or not adult patrons and children and young adults were permitted to use them. Each of the resources was available in between 39 and 54 percent of all public library outlets (figure 3-7). The percentages of outlets allowing adult patrons to use these resources were about the same as the percentages allowing children and young adults to use them. Generally, the difference between the number of outlets in which the resources were available and the number permitting them to be used by patrons was about 10 percent. One exception was e-mail accounts that were available in 44 percent of the outlets, but only 11 percent permitted adult patrons to use them and 9 percent allowed usage by children and young adults.

Figure 3-7. Percent of public library outlets with various Internet resources, and the percent reporting those resources are used by adult patrons and children or young adults



Outlets were asked if two types of Internet services, using the Internet to answer reference questions and providing training on the use of the Internet, were provided to adult patrons and children and young adults. For both services, about the same percentage provide the services to adult patrons as provide them to children and young adults. About 62 percent of all outlets use the Internet to answer reference questions and about 40 percent provide training on the use of the Internet (figure 3-8).

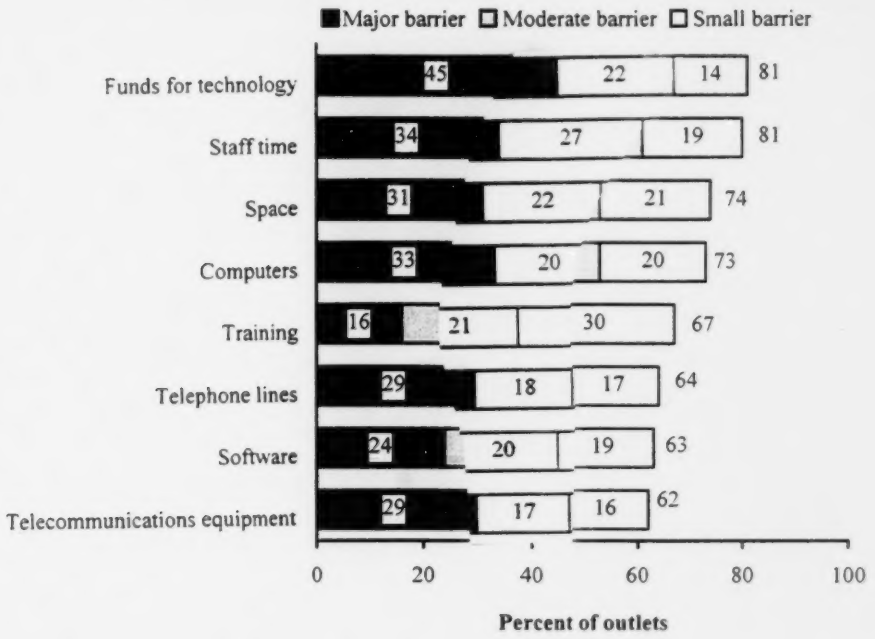
Figure 3-8. Percent of public library outlets providing Internet services to adult patrons and children or young adults



Barriers to the Provision of Internet Services

Public library outlets were asked about the extent to which the lack of or insufficient amount of 15 factors were barriers to the outlet's ability to gain access or maximize access to Internet services. Factors reported by more than 60 percent of the outlets were the lack of, or insufficient amount of, funds for technology (81 percent), staff time (81 percent), space (74 percent), computers (73 percent), training for librarians (67 percent), telephone lines (64 percent), software (63 percent), and telecommunications equipment such as modems (62 percent) (figure 3-9).

Figure 3-9. Percent of public library outlets facing various barriers to maximizing Internet access, and the degree of the barriers



NOTE: Details may not add totals due to rounding.

Programs and Services

This section describes programs and services for parents and caregivers, usage of services by children and young adults, and barriers to providing services to children and young adults.

The literature of librarianship often notes that a major value of public libraries is to encourage young people to read for enjoyment. This is a common goal for school libraries as well. One of the papers commissioned for this study reviewed the research literature about the effects of independent reading on school achievement (Cullinan, 1999). It organized the research by age groups—preschool and kindergarten, primary and elementary grades, and middle school and young adults. Cullinan identified five common factors in successful programs designed to promote independent reading. The two factor most relevant to this study were:

- The amount of free reading done outside of school has consistently been found to relate to achievement in vocabulary, reading comprehension, verbal fluency, and general information. Students' reading achievement correlates with success in school and the amount of independent reading they do.

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- Library programs are founded on the knowledge that literacy experiences have a lasting effect on language growth, reading development, and scholastic achievement (p. 19).

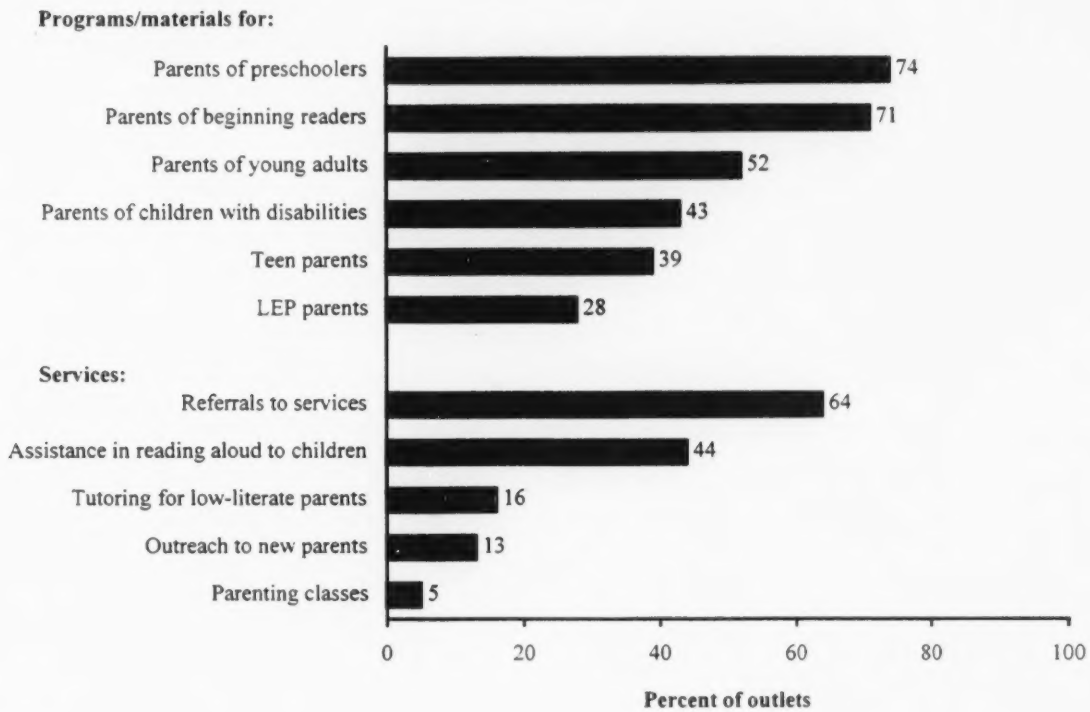
Programs and Services for Parents and Caregivers

Public library services to young children and their families are examined by Steven Herb and Sara Willoughby-Herb (1999) in a commissioned paper for this study. The paper provides a rationale for the importance of linking readiness to learn and public library services to children and contains a review of theory and research on the topic of learning readiness, especially in relationship to literacy. In addition, it provides a framework for literacy programs by summarizing broad guidelines derived from theory and specific practices derived from research. The framework is then used to examine public library programs for preschoolers and their caregivers. The authors conclude that "a comparison of public libraries' mission statements and activities in advocacy and program development with the early literacy framework described in this paper indicates a nearly perfect fit in philosophy as well as methodology" (p.30).

In the survey, public library outlets were asked if they provided 11 different types of services or programs for parents or caregivers. The most frequently available services, provided by more than three-fifths of all public library outlets, were programs or materials for parents of preschoolers (74 percent) and beginning readers (71 percent) as well as referrals to services from other organizations (64 percent) (figure 3-10). Services that were least apt to be offered were services to limited English proficient (LEP) parents (28 percent), tutoring for low-literate parents or caregivers (16 percent), outreach to new parents (13 percent), and parenting classes (5 percent). For most of the possible comparisons, central or main libraries were more apt to have each of the programs and services for parents and caregivers than were branches or single location libraries.

In the year prior to the survey, public library outlets provided an average of 58 story hour sessions for preschool children with an average of 15 children per session. Central or main libraries provided an average of 107 preschool story hour sessions in one year, which is significantly higher than the overall outlet average.

Figure 3-10. Percent of public library outlets providing various programs and services for parents and caregivers



Born to Read
Southeastern City

Born to Read is a partnership between the library and a children's medical center. The program targets teenage mothers with children under the age of 3, who live in at-risk neighborhoods with high incidences of teenage pregnancies. The goal of the program is to give young parents the knowledge to provide for the early education and well-being of their babies.

Two of the library branches serve as training sites for the beginning parenting classes. The parents bring their children to the classes, and their case workers attend as well. The subjects covered in the 4-week program include the importance of books and reading, how to read to your baby, stages of development, types of books, toys and safety, and how children learn through their senses.

First, the librarians work with the parents by discussing these topics with them, demonstrating some of the recommendations, and helping the parents create items such as a textured book. While the librarians are working with the mothers, the family support workers are working with the children. Then the mothers and their children do a lap-sit together. The librarians lead the activity, and the parents imitate them. The case workers observe and do followup with the parents during weekly home visits. The librarians may also conduct booktalks for the parents, show educational videos when appropriate, and discuss individual issues with parents. Parents may check out books during the class. As part of the program, the parents have access to a mobile classroom designed to train caregivers in literacy, parenting skills, and reading readiness.

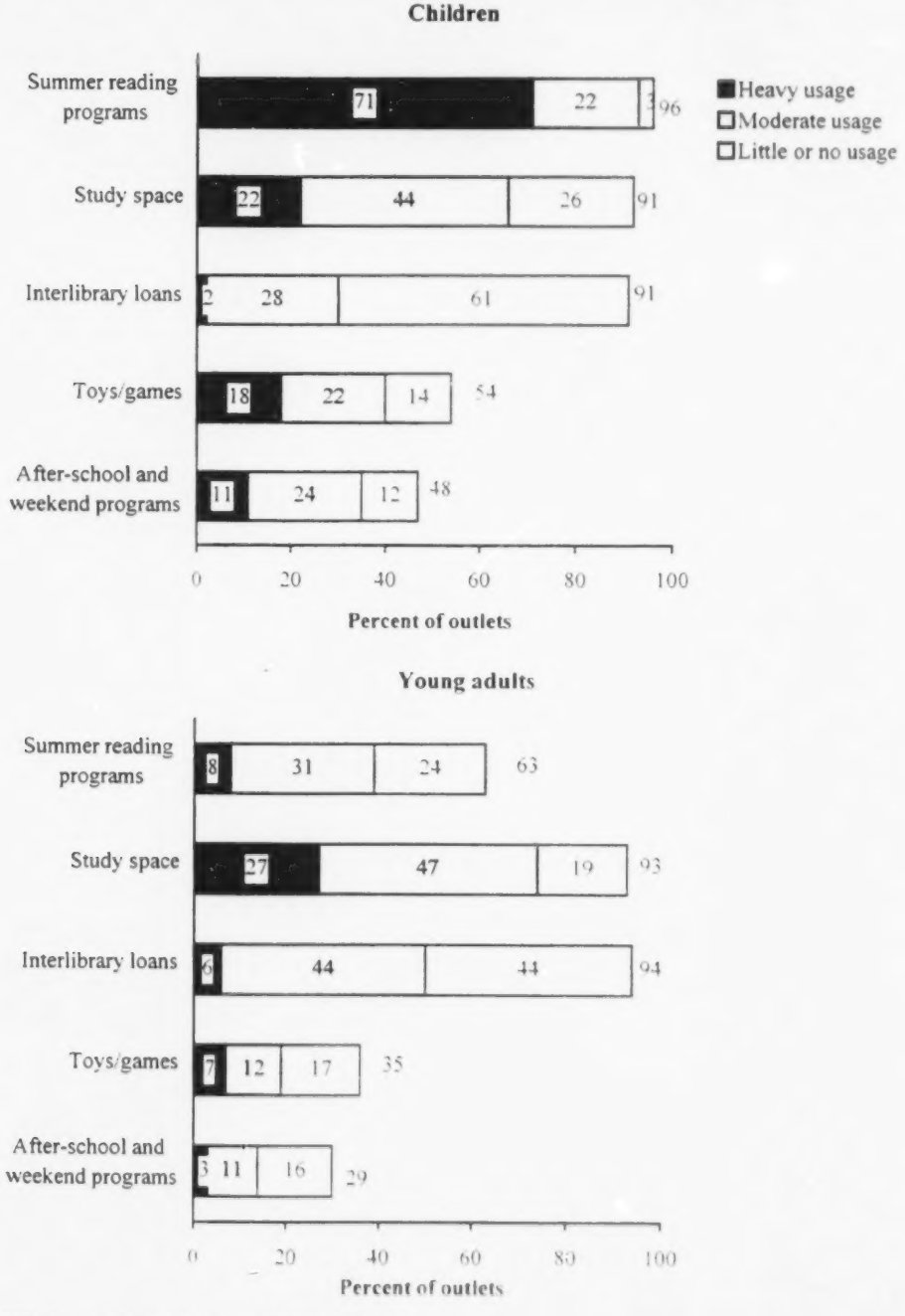
Home Schooling Services

Some families choose to educate their children at home. For these families, the public library can be an important resource. About three-fifths (62 percent) of all public library outlets provide services to families involved in home schooling. Thus, approximately 9,521 outlets provide these services. About one-third of all outlets provide a file of information about home schooling in their area (30 percent), special borrowing privileges (33 percent), and use of a meeting room (35 percent).

Usage of Services by Children and Young Adults

Public library outlets were asked about the availability and extent of usage of 12 services by children and young adults. Summer reading programs for children were available in most outlets (96 percent), where they were heavily used in 71 percent and moderately used by another 22 percent. In contrast, only about two-thirds (63 percent) of all outlets had summer reading programs for young adults and only 8 percent report heavy usage by young adults with another 31 percent reporting moderate usage (figure 3-11). Two services that were available in most library outlets for both children and young adults were study space and interlibrary loans; however, both services received heavier usage by young adults. After-school and weekend programs for children were available in almost half (48 percent) of the outlets, but only 29 percent had these services for young adults. Tutoring was not available in most outlets; only 14 percent provided this service for children and 15 percent, for young adults. Fewer than half of all outlets offered homework assistance services to children (42 percent) or young adults (41 percent). About one-third of all outlets provided services to children (33 percent) or young adults (29 percent) with disabilities.

Figure 3-11. Percent of public library outlets providing various services, and the rate of usage of those resources and services by children and young adults



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

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Homework Center
Pacific Coast City

The Homework Center Program has three main goals: 1) to provide a productive, alternative environment for at-risk youth; 2) to provide materials to develop interest and skills in reading and assist with school work; and 3) to develop community outreach for at-risk youth. The program has three main components: study centers, tutoring programs, and satellite homework centers.

All outlets in the library system have study centers. When the centers were set up, each was given a core collection of reference materials, at least one study carrel, and a computer.

The tutoring programs, offered in about half of the outlets, are intended to help students with their homework and with reading skills. They are generally open to students in grades K-12, although the focus is on elementary grades. The tutoring is available at specified times during the week, and students come on a drop-in basis. The branch librarian or youth service librarian generally takes responsibility for setting up and overseeing the branch's tutoring program, providing the tutors with a place to work, and advertising the program's availability. Tutors are volunteers, drawn from the general community and a variety of organizations, but at some libraries the staff also participate in the tutoring.

Satellite homework centers have been established at locations in the community where there are large concentrations of children, such recreation centers and public housing sites. The library provides a collections of reference materials and a locking cabinet to store them for each of the sites. However, the hosting organizations are responsible for providing the children with access to the materials and monitoring their use. Library staff are not involved in the operations of the satellite centers.

The central library provides the branches with general guidelines regarding the operation of the program and a list of materials that can be purchased for the program, and it must approve any equipment purchases. The central library establishes and maintains the overall relationship with other organizations. It provides the branches with technical assistance materials relevant to the centers (for example, job descriptions for volunteer tutors, bibliographies for curriculum areas such as black history), which the branches are free to use as they see fit. Responsibility for the implementing the program lies with the branch managers and their youth service librarians. Operation of the program has become more decentralized over time with individual library facilities having the autonomy to develop the program's components to fit their communities' needs.

Barriers to Providing Services to Children and Young Adults

The public library outlets were asked if 13 factors were barriers to the provision of services to children and young adults. For nine of these factors, significantly more public library outlets reported that it was a barrier to providing services to young adults than reported it for children. (Barriers for young adult programming reported by at least half of the public library outlets were insufficient programs (64 percent), lack of outreach programming (60 percent), insufficient space (58 percent), insufficient library staff (54 percent), and insufficient materials (50 percent) (figure 3-12).

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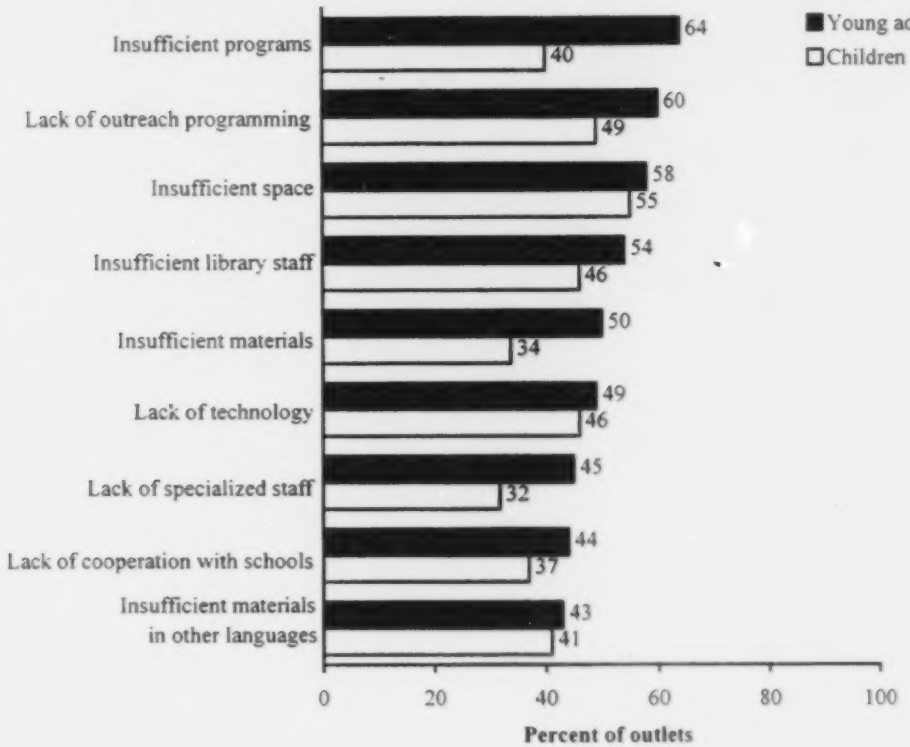
Figure 3-12. Public library outlets' most common barriers to providing services to children and young adults



Library Building or System Outreach

This sections describes needs assessments and evaluations conducted at either the building or system level as well as outreach programs or services for children, young adults, or their parents.

Needs Assessments and Evaluations

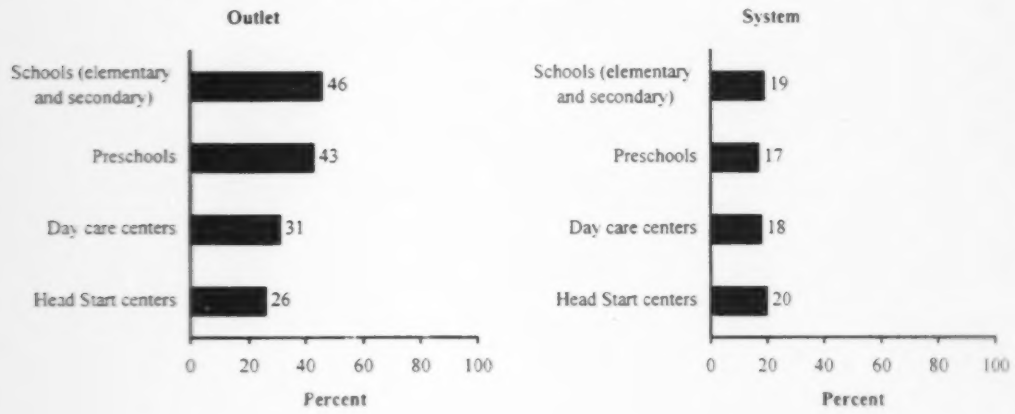
Needs assessments and evaluations are mechanisms for libraries to determine if they are meeting their goals and objectives and if there are unmet needs that they could address. Public library outlets were asked if they or their library system had conducted a needs assessment directed to schools in their service area during the 2 years prior to the survey, and only 9 percent had done so. However, of the ones that had conducted such a needs assessment, 83 percent had made changes to existing programs or services as a result of the needs assessment, and 74 percent had added new programs or services.

In the 2 years prior to the survey, 81 percent of all outlets or their library systems had conducted at least one type of evaluation of the materials or services provided by the outlet, and 69 percent of those conducting an evaluation made changes as a result. The most common type of evaluation was an informal one involving library staff only, conducted by 75 percent of all outlets or their systems. An evaluation involving the community was done by 52 percent of the outlets or their systems and a written survey of library staff was done by 38 percent.

Outreach Programs

Outreach programs enable public libraries to extend their services to groups or individuals, particularly those who have had little or no experience with libraries. In the survey, public library outlets were asked about outreach programs or services specifically for children, young adults, or their parents that were provided within their service by either the outlets themselves or by their library system. Of the 15 programs listed on the survey, the outreach program provided most frequently by the outlets was outreach to schools, both elementary and secondary, which was done by almost half (46 percent) of the outlets (figure 3-13). In addition, 19 percent of the outlets reported that their systems provided outreach to the schools. Other outreach programs provided by at least one-fourth of the outlets were programs for preschools (43 percent), day care centers (31 percent), and Head Start centers (26 percent). The outlets were asked to include bookmobile services in reporting their conduct of outreach programs to various facilities. They were also asked specifically about bookmobile services to schools in their service area. Only 4 percent of the outlets reported that they provided bookmobile services to schools. In addition, 11 percent reported that their library system provided these services.

Figure 3-13. Outreach programs for children, young adults, or their parents provided by public library outlets and their library systems



Children's Readmobile
Great Lakes Suburb

The Readmobile serves 72 home-care providers, who have anywhere from 3 to 10 preschool children each, and a number of institutional settings, primarily preschool literacy centers. The Readmobile is on the road 4 days a week, and makes an average of 10 stops a day. Home-care stops are usually 30 minutes; institutional stops can be anywhere from 60 minutes to a full day. Each stop site gets visited once a month; an institution may be visited twice.

All children are given a no-fee, no-fine library card, which are held by the home-care providers or by the institutions. Readmobile staff know their participants well and carefully stock the Readmobile for each day's stops. The Readmobile carries current magazines for the adults and materials on parenting and working with children, as well as puppets and other creative materials. The Readmobile is capable of carrying at one time 2,500 books, 37 periodical subscriptions, and 200 book-cassette sets. Altogether, 13,000 books are part of the program, but other books and materials can be obtained through interlibrary loan.

At a family home-care stop, the children climb on the Readmobile to have a story read to them. They then check in the books they took out the previous month and check out as many more as they want, with the supervision of the home-care provider. If they have forgotten their books, they may still check out up to four more. An onboard online computer scans the books and sends the information back to the Readmobile Center instantaneously, unless there are transmission problems, which can be common. The Readmobile carries a generator to power the equipment on board. The child checking out books receives a receipt for his/her books; this is a relatively new innovation, which the providers appreciate because they can keep track of the books more easily. An institutional stop is much the same, except that the children receive storytime in their classrooms, and half of each class is taken to the Readmobile to return their books and pick out more. Providers or teachers can also come on board and check out many books if they so desire.

The Readmobile is staffed by two people, who change from day to day. Generally, one reads the stories and reshelves returned books and the other checks books in and out.

Initially, the participating child care homes were those with licensed caregivers who contracted with the county. However, the staff discovered that they were not reaching the neediest children. Therefore, they began to look specifically for unlicensed providers and to expand the number of institutions because they tended to serve a high proportion of low-income children.

4. Cooperation Between Schools and Public Libraries

One of the papers commissioned for this study explored the range of successful cooperative relationships between school and public libraries and the factors that must be taken into account in establishing these relationships (Fitzgibbons, 1999). It provides a historical perspective to these cooperative endeavors and discusses the unique and complementary roles and goals of school and public libraries. Fitzgibbons reviewed several specific cooperative efforts, including networks, resource-sharing arrangements, and combined school-public libraries as well as general efforts to cooperate and collaborate. She found that the factors leading to success in these activities included "a shared vision and common goals; a process of formal planning that involves the establishment of joint policies and procedures; commitment on the part of administrators, decisionmakers, staff, and the general public; active communication and interaction; and adequate funding and staffing that allows innovation and risktaking" (p.1).

Both the school and public library surveys contained questions about cooperative activities. In this chapter, responses are first described from the perspective of the respondents, school library media centers and public library outlets. A comparison of the responses is provided at the end of the chapter.

School Library Media Center Perspective

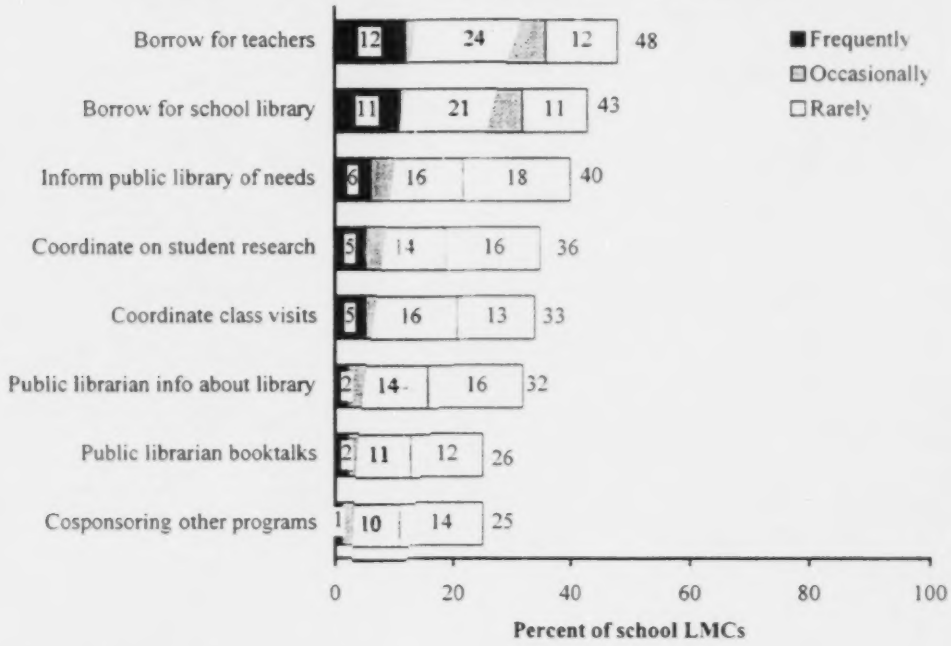
This section describes the types of cooperative activities in which school LMCs participated with public libraries and the barriers to interaction with public libraries.

Cooperative Activities

Three-fifths (60 percent) of library media centers at public schools participated in some type of cooperative activity with a local public library during the 12 months preceding the survey. On average, those LMCs that did participate in some type of cooperative activity said they cooperated with 2.3 public libraries, for a total of 104,009 public libraries. The most likely types of participation were borrowing materials for teachers (48 percent of all library media centers at public schools), borrowing materials for the school library (43 percent), informing the public library of curriculum or homework needs (40 percent), coordinating about student research projects (36 percent), coordinating class visits to the public

library (33 percent), and public librarians providing information about using the public library (32 percent) (figure 4-1). School libraries most typically reported their participation in these activities was either rare or occasional (between 29 and 36 percent) while 2 to 12 percent said their participation was frequent.

Figure 4-1. Public school library media centers' (LMCs) most common cooperative activities with local public libraries, and the frequency of those activities



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

At public schools, 21 percent of the library media centers worked with the public library in planning for a summer reading program conducted for school-age children. Such participation was more common at elementary schools than secondary schools (25 percent versus 11 percent).

For some public schools, interaction with the local public library may be facilitated because the school library media center is located in the same building as the local public library. This occurred at 4 percent of the public school library media centers. Only 3 percent of public school library media centers reported not having a local public library in their area. Most public school LMCs had several kinds of libraries in their area, including another library in the school system (89 percent), a local college or university library (84 percent), and a library operated on a regional basis for several school districts (65 percent).

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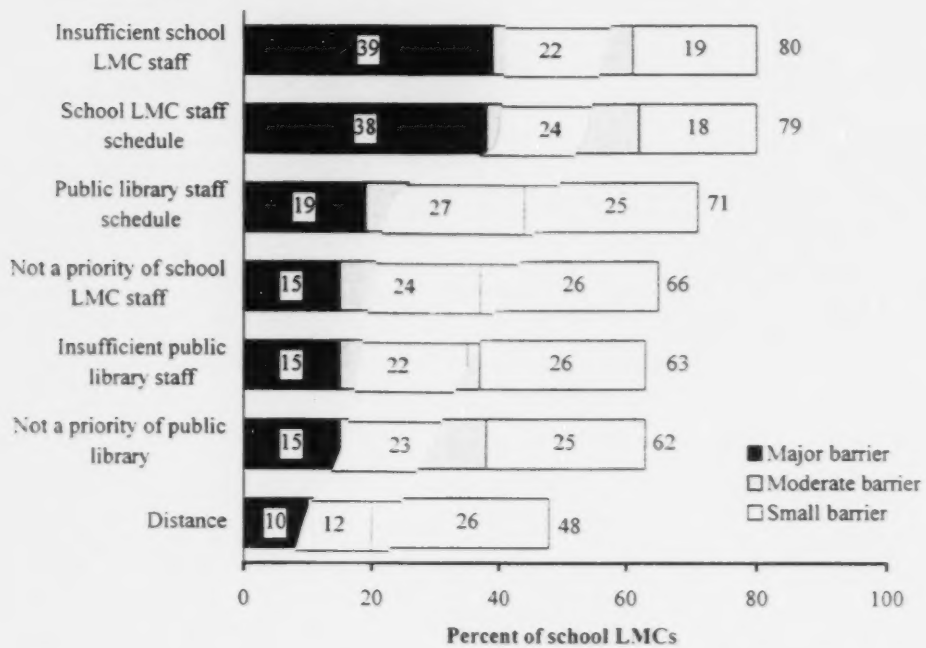
Besides the local public libraries, another potential resource is the library at a local college or university. Among library media centers at public schools, 77 had such a library that provided access to resources for teachers, and 49 percent had one that provided access for students.

Barriers to the Interaction with Public Libraries

The library media centers also were asked about the degree to which each of seven different factors was a barrier to the interaction between their school and the public library. The greatest barriers were the schedule of the school LMC staff and an insufficient number of school LMC staff, with 61 percent of library media centers citing each factor as either a major or moderate barrier (figure 4-2). The only factor not listed as providing at least a small barrier by a majority of school libraries was distance (52 percent), though even this factor was a major barrier for 10 percent of the school libraries and a moderate barrier for 12 percent.

Figure 4-2. Percent of public library media centers (LMCs) indicating various factors were barriers to the interaction between their school and the public library, and the degree of the barriers



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

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Public Library Perspective

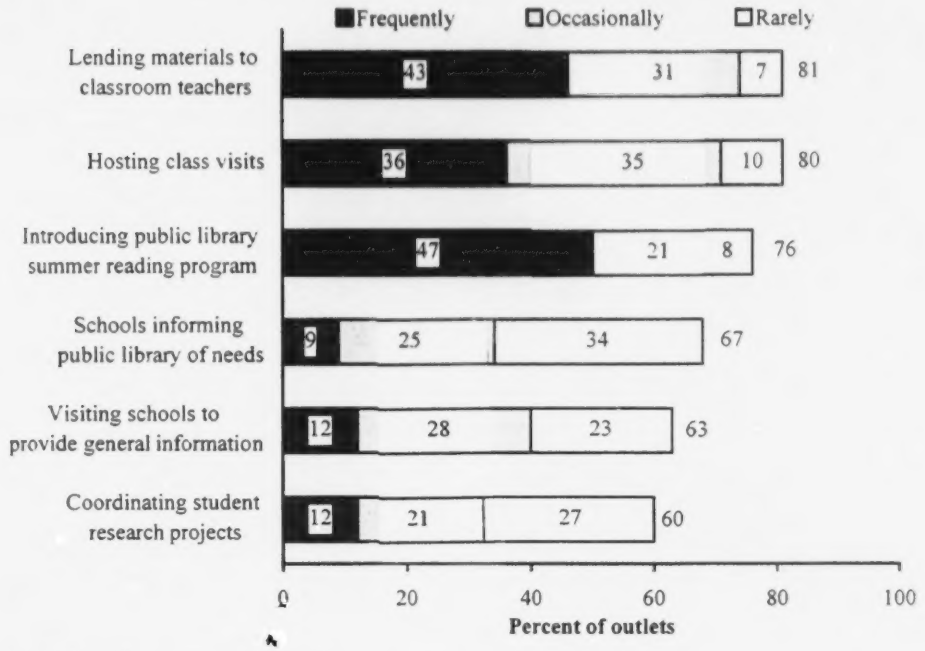
In this section, cooperative activities between the public library and local public and private schools are described from the public library perspective. Subject area resources, homework assistance services, programs and materials related to school reform, and barriers to the interaction with schools also are included in this discussion.

Cooperative Activities

Altogether, 86 percent of all public library outlets participated in some kind of cooperative activity with a local public or private school during the 12 months preceding the survey. For central or main libraries, 97 percent were engaged in such cooperative activities. The most common cooperative activities, in which more than three-fourths of all public library outlets participated, were lending materials to classroom teachers (81 percent), hosting class visits from the schools to the library (80 percent), and introducing the public library summer reading program at schools (76 percent) (figure 4-3). Cooperative activities in which more than half of the public library outlets had participated were having the schools informing them of curriculum or upcoming homework needs (67 percent), visiting schools to promote or provide general information about using the public library (63 percent), and coordinating with schools regarding student research projects, including science fair projects (60 percent).

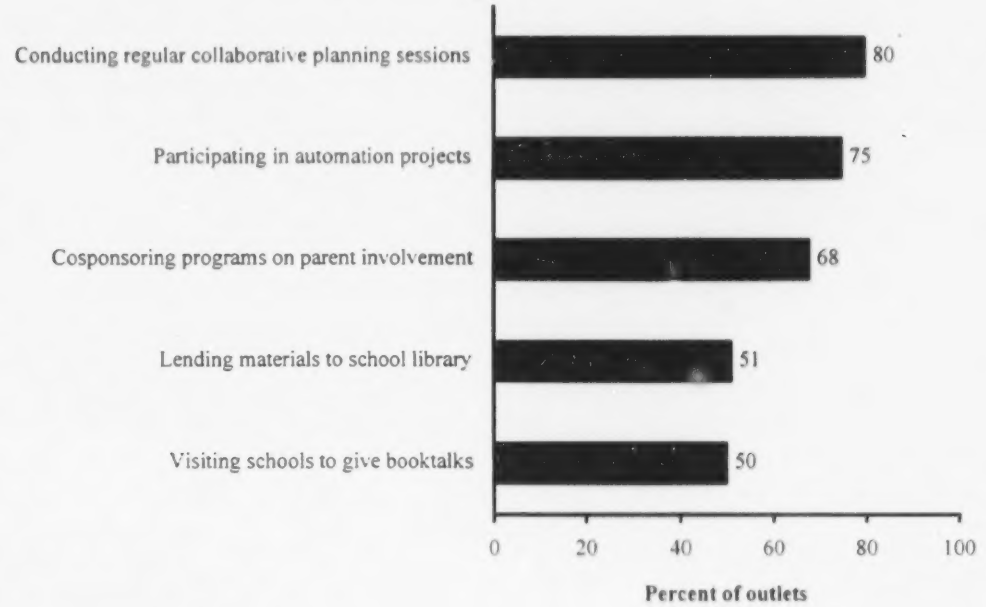
About half of the outlets had never been involved in visiting schools to give booktalks (50 percent) or lending materials to the school library (51 percent) (figure 4-4). Other cooperative activities in which more than half of the outlets had never participated were conducting regular collaborative planning sessions (80 percent); providing information literacy training for teachers or students (76 percent); sharing equipment (75 percent); participating in automation projects such as shared online resources, searches, or catalogs (75 percent); participating in or providing joint inservice training for school and public librarians (75 percent); and cosponsoring programs regarding parental involvement (68 percent).

Figure 4-3. Public library outlets' most common cooperative activities with school library media centers (LMCs), and the frequency of those activities



NOTE: Totals may not add due to rounding.

Figure 4-4.—Percent of public library outlets that never engaged in various cooperative activities with school library media centers (LMCs)



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For public library outlets involved in cooperative activities with schools, the mean number of public schools in their service area was 6.7, and the mean number with which they cooperated was 4.9. The mean number of private school located in a public library outlet's service area was 2.1, and the mean number of private schools with which the outlets cooperated was 1.3.

In conducting cooperative activities with schools, public library outlet staff reported that they interacted with teachers or counselors (83 percent of the outlets), school library media specialists (73 percent), and school administrators (67 percent). Staff of central or main libraries were more apt to interact with school staff than were the staff of branches or single location libraries.

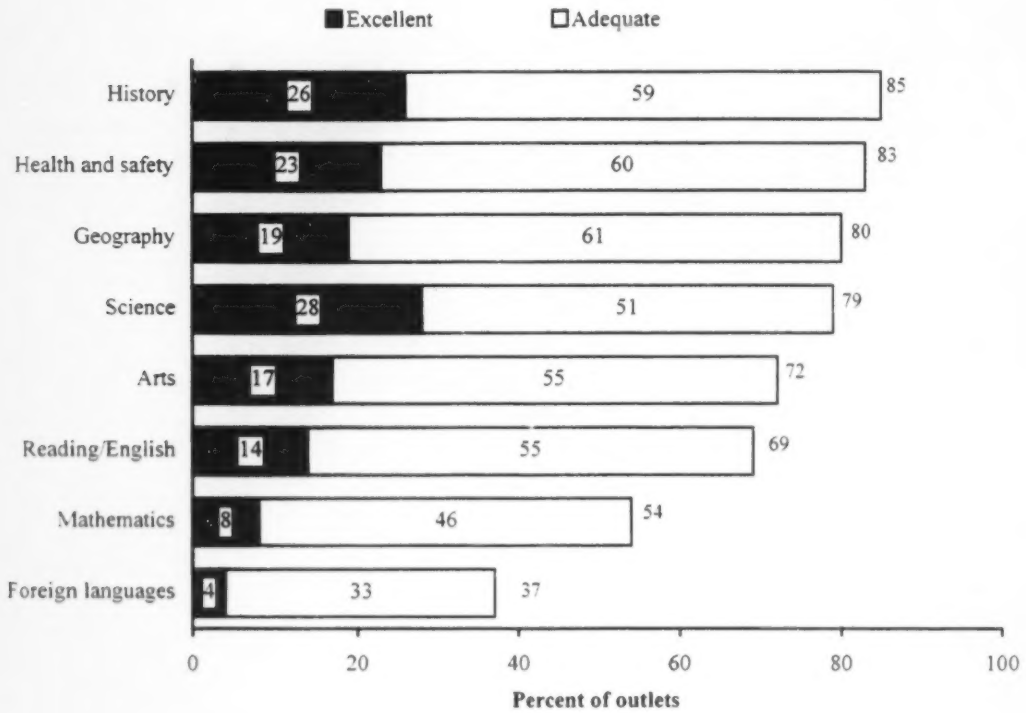
In some cases, cooperation may be facilitated by the fact that a public library outlet and a school were located in the same building. Estimates indicated that 3 percent of public library outlets were located in a school building in 1997. An appendix to the Fitzgibbons paper commissioned for this study contains a list of combined libraries.

Resources and Services

Public library outlets were asked about the adequacy of their resources in various school subject areas. For most of the more traditional subject areas such as history, geography, science, and reading/English, at least two-thirds of the outlets considered their resources to be adequate or excellent (figure 4-5). Foreign languages was an area in which only about one-third (37 percent) considered their resources to be adequate or excellent.

One way in which public libraries help school students is by providing various homework assistance programs. More than half of all outlets (58 percent) provide reserve collections for class assignments, and almost half (47 percent) provide telephone assistance for homework assignments. Reference packets in specific subjects are provided by 22 percent of all public library outlets. Less common services are homework centers (17 percent of all outlets) and homework hotlines (2 percent).

Figure 4-5.—Percent of public library outlets reporting that they were adequately or excellently equipped to provide resources to schools



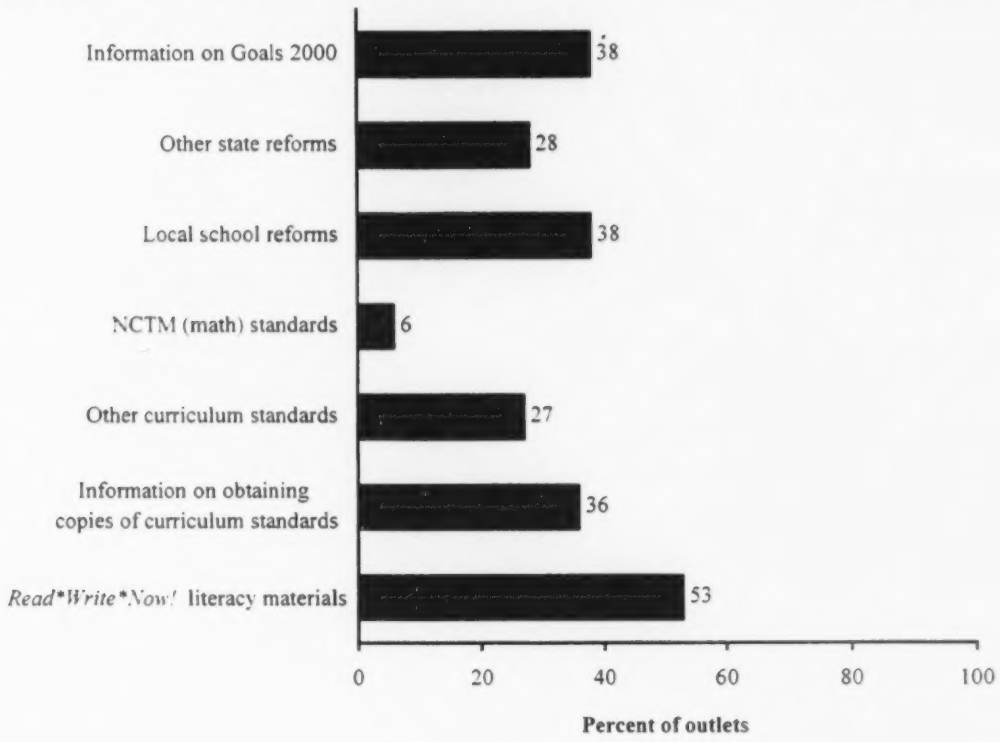
Educational Reform Efforts

Public libraries can assist schools by participating in educational reform efforts. Public library outlets were asked if they had been involved in any programs designed specifically to address the eight of the National Education Goals during the 5 years prior to the survey. The goal with which the most outlets had been involved was adult literacy and lifelong learning (41 percent). The goal with which the least outlets had been involved was teacher education and professional development (9 percent).

Outlets were asked about the availability of various materials related to school reform. About half of the outlets had the U.S. Department of Education's *Read * Write * Now!* literacy materials (53 percent) (figure 4-6). Fewer than 40 percent of the outlets had any of the other reform-related materials such as information on Goals 2000 (38 percent) or local school reform efforts (38 percent).

In spring 1997, 24 percent of all public library outlets reported that they coordinated or supported the U.S. Department of Education's *Read * Write * Now!* literacy program. Outlets with this program coordinated it with public schools (33 percent), private schools (12 percent), and other community learning partners (33 percent).

Figure 4-6. Percent of public library outlets with various materials relating to school reform



Public Library/School Cooperation
Midwestern Suburb

When the school budget for library media centers was reduced, the public library in this community stepped in to help fill the gap. It developed seven projects involving cooperative activities between the schools and the public library. Three of them are described below.

For the student liaison project, the public library established a new position for a professional librarian to spend half time in the elementary and middle schools and half time at the public library during the hours after school. The librarian thus became a familiar face to students, who began frequenting the public library after school. During the summer, the student liaison worked full time in the public library. As a result of the project, the interaction between library staff and teachers increased, and both teachers and students became more aware of library resources. Teachers began using the library's assignment alert forms, and the materials related to the assignments were put into a reserve area. In addition, participation in the summer reading program increased. One of the challenges in operating this project was finding a person with the appropriate credentials. The state required that the person have a K-12 teaching certificate with a library endorsement, and the public library wanted a person with an ALA/MLS (master's in library science or information studies approved or accredited by the American Library Association).

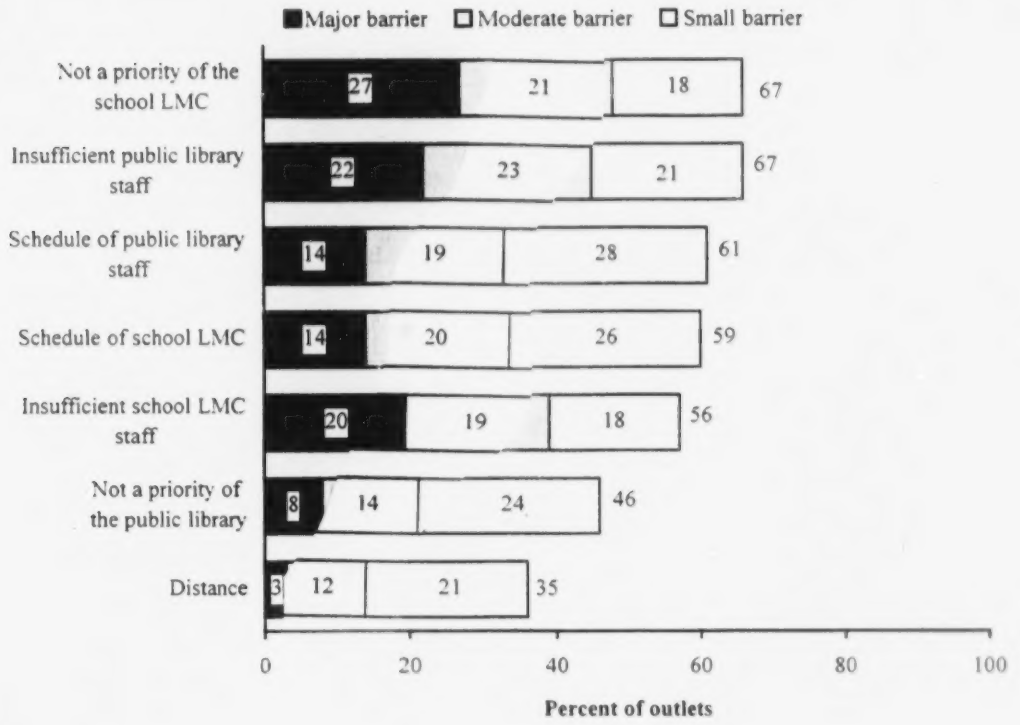
In a second project, the public library provided curriculum-based tours, designed around a topic the students were studying. These tours were jointly planned by the teacher and librarian and often involved parent volunteers. At the middle school level, the librarian sometimes went to the school to show students how to dial into the public library's catalog. In addition, the librarian demonstrated how to conduct a literature search on the topic being studied.

A third project was designed for new teachers. As a part of their orientation, new teachers received a 45-minute tour of the library. It was an opportunity for the teachers to learn about the available resources and to begin to establish a relationship. They were also told about how the library could assist them through assignment alerts. Since some of the teachers were new to the area, this was a prime opportunity for them to get their own library cards.

Barriers to the Interaction with Schools

Public libraries were asked about the barriers to the interaction between public library outlets and schools. Barriers indicated by about two-thirds of the outlets were that interaction was not a priority of the school LMC (67 percent) and insufficient public library staff (67 percent), and almost half of the outlets considered these to be major or moderate barriers (figure 4-7). Additional barriers for more than half of the outlets were the schedule of public library staff (61 percent), schedule of the school LMC (59 percent), and insufficient school LMC staff (56 percent), and about one-third of the outlets considered these to be major or moderate barriers.

Figure 4-7. Percent of public library outlets indicating various factors were barriers to the interaction between their outlet and the schools, and the degree of the barriers



NOTE: Details may not add to totals due to rounding.

Comparison of the Perspectives

Public library outlets were more apt to participate in cooperative activities than were public school library media centers. In the 12 months preceding the surveys, 86 percent of the public library outlets had engaged in a cooperative activity with a school, whereas only 60 percent of the public school LMCs had participated in a cooperative activity with a public library. The most common cooperative activities were quite similar for the two types of libraries. However, the percentage of public library outlets reporting these activities and the frequency of occurrence was greater for the public library outlets. A possible reason for this difference is that public libraries may be supporting a number of school activities beyond those specifically associated with the school library media center.

Both the school and the public library surveys listed seven factors that might be barriers to cooperation. For five of the factors a greater percentage of public school LMCs considered them to be

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barriers than did public library outlets. The most common factors identified by public school LMCs were their schedules and insufficient LMC staff. Similarly, insufficient public library staff and staff schedules were among the most common barriers identified by the public library outlets.

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